

# CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED TRAIN

Project Environmental Impact Report /  
Environmental Impact Statement

DRAFT

## Scoping Report

Merced to Fresno Section  
High-Speed Train  
Project EIR/EIS

(Amended Merced to Bakersfield  
Scoping Report)

January 2010

California High-Speed  
Rail Authority



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Railroad Administration





# **CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED TRAIN PROJECT EIR/EIS**

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## **TASK 3**

### **MERCED TO FRESNO SECTION**

#### **SCOPING REPORT**

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## Summary

The purpose of this report is to summarize the scoping process and comments received during the scoping period. The report provides a brief project background, a description of the scoping process and meetings, a list of other outreach activities, and a summary of the public and agency comments received during scoping.

In 2005, the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) completed a Statewide Program EIR/EIS as the first-phase of a tiered environmental review process for the proposed California High-Speed Train (HST) system. In 2008, the Authority published the Bay Area to Central Valley HST Final Program EIR/EIS. As part of the HST Alternative selected for further analysis, the Authority and FRA selected certain corridors/general alignments and general station locations for further study (see Figure 1-2).<sup>1</sup> The Merced to Fresno HST Project Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) will describe site-specific alignment alternatives and station locations within this corridor.

The Authority encourages broad participation during EIR/EIS scoping and review of the draft environmental documents. Comments and suggestions are invited from all interested agencies and the public to insure the full range of issues related to the proposed action are addressed, including all reasonable alternatives. In particular, the Authority is interested in determining where there are areas of environmental sensitivity and where there could be a potential for significant impacts from the HST project.

An HST project section was previously defined for the corridor between Merced and Bakersfield, and the Authority and FRA initiated the environmental process. On February 24, 2009, a California State Notice of Preparation (NOP) was distributed to the State Clearinghouse; elected officials, local, regional, and State agencies; and the interested public. A Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the *Federal Register* on March 16, 2009. The Authority and FRA subsequently determined that the environmental effects of the HST System from Merced to Bakersfield are more appropriately assessed in two separate EIR/EIS documents, one from Merced to Fresno and another for Fresno to Bakersfield. An NOP and NOI for the Merced to Fresno Section HST Project EIR/EIS amending the environmental process were issued on September 29, 2009 and October 1, 2009, respectively.

In response to the NOP/NOIs, public agencies with legal jurisdiction were requested to advise the Authority and the FRA of the applicable permit and environmental review requirements of each agency, and the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Public scoping meetings were scheduled as an important component of the scoping process for both the State and federal environmental review.

During the scoping period, three public scoping meetings were held between March 18 and March 26, 2009 in the Merced to Fresno project corridor, with a total of 270 people attending the three meetings. Public scoping meetings were not held for the amended environmental process. The scoping meetings held in March 2009 for the Merced to Bakersfield HST Project EIR/EIS are an important component of the scoping process for the Merced to Fresno HST Project EIR/EIS for both the State and Federal environmental review. The Authority and FRA received a total of 144 comments from individuals and organizations and comments from 31 agencies on the proposed project. Major issues identified as a result of scoping are listed below.

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<sup>1</sup> Highway route numbers are provided only as a convenient reference for the reader, not as a limitation on the corridor to be considered.

- The location of stations
- The location of the HST alignment
- The location of the maintenance facility
- Connections to local transit
- Fast tracking of the project
- The benefits of HST, including air quality, congestion relief, and economic development
- Agricultural impacts
- Noise impacts
- Natural resource impacts
- Impacts to listed species
- Cost and financing of the system
- Use of U.S. labor and products for HST construction
- Power source and requirements
- Economic growth issues
- Benefits/impacts on local business
- Employment opportunities
- Ridership estimates
- Property acquisition
- Displacement of people
- Potential devaluation of property
- Hazardous materials impacts
- Rail consolidation



## 1.0 Introduction

The following report summarizes the scoping process for the Merced to Fresno Section of the California High Speed Train (HST) project. This report includes a project description, explains the purpose of scoping, describes the scoping notification process, summarizes the five project scoping meetings, summarizes the comments received from the public and agencies, and describes the next steps for the project.

An HST project section was previously defined for the corridor between Merced and Bakersfield, and the Authority and FRA initiated the environmental process. On February 24, 2009, a California State Notice of Preparation (NOP) was distributed to the State Clearinghouse; elected officials, local, regional, and State agencies; and the interested public. A Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the *Federal Register* on March 16, 2009. The Authority and FRA subsequently determined that the environmental effects of the HST System from Merced to Bakersfield are more appropriately assessed in two separate EIR/EIS documents, one from Merced to Fresno and another for Fresno to Bakersfield. An NOP and NOI for the Merced to Fresno Section HST Project EIR/EIS amending the environmental process were issued on September 29, 2009 and October 1, 2009, respectively.

### 1.1 Description of Project

Since 1992, extensive information has been gathered and a preliminary evaluation has been completed concerning the potential environmental effects associated with numerous HST corridor alternatives throughout California. From feasibility studies through conceptual design, a variety of technical studies have been undertaken to address the engineering, operational, financial, ridership, and environmental aspects of such a system. The findings of these studies resulted in a Final Business Plan prepared by the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority, November 2008). The Authority was established in 1996 and is authorized and directed by statute to undertake the planning and development of a proposed statewide HST network that is fully coordinated with other public transportation services. This study concluded that California would benefit substantially from HST transportation and the Authority initiated further evaluation of a HST system connecting the San Francisco Bay Area, Sacramento, Los Angeles, and San Diego. The proposed statewide HST system (Figure 1-1) consists of 800 miles of dedicated, fully grade-separated, state-of-the-art track with trains operating at speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour.

In 2005, the Authority and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) completed a Final Program Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the Proposed California High-Speed Train System (Statewide Program EIR/EIS) as the first phase of a tiered environmental review process. The Authority certified the Final Program EIR under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and approved the proposed HST System, and FRA issued a record of decision under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) on the Statewide Program EIR/EIS. The Statewide Program EIR/EIS established the purpose and need for the HST system, analyzed a HST system, and compared it with a No Project/No Action Alternative and a Modal Alternative. In approving the Statewide Program EIR/EIS, the Authority and the FRA selected the HST Alternative, selected certain corridors/general alignments and general station locations for further study, incorporated mitigation strategies and design practices, and specified further measures to guide the development of the HST system in site-specific project environmental review to avoid and minimize potential adverse environmental impacts. In the subsequent Bay Area to Central Valley HST Final Program EIR/EIS published in 2008, the Authority and FRA selected the Pacheco Pass Alternative to connect the Bay Area to the Central Valley

The Merced to Fresno Section HST Project EIR/EIS will tier from the Final Statewide Program EIR/EIS and the Final Bay Area to Central Valley HST Program EIR/EIS in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations §1508.28) and CEQA guidelines (14 California Code of Regulations §15168[b]), building upon all previous work prepared for and incorporated in the Statewide Program EIR/EIS and the Bay Area to Central Valley HST Program EIR/EIS. Tiering is a staged



Figure 1-1

Proposed California HST System

approach to NEPA in which broad programs and issues are evaluated in initial (Tier 1) analyses and site-specific proposals and impacts are evaluated in subsequent tier studies. The Merced to Fresno Section HST Project EIR/EIS will describe site-specific environmental impacts, identify specific mitigation measures to address those impacts, and discuss design practices the Authority proposes to use to avoid and minimize potential adverse environmental impacts. The FRA and the

Authority will assess the site characteristics, size, nature, and timing of proposed site-specific HST project sections to determine whether the adverse impacts are potentially significant as defined by NEPA and CEQA, and whether adverse impacts can be avoided or mitigated. This document and other project EIR/EISs will identify and evaluate reasonable and feasible site-specific alignment alternatives, and evaluate the impacts from construction, operation, and maintenance of the HST system.

## 1.2 Project Alternatives

The Merced to Fresno Section HST Project EIR/EIS will consider a No Action or No Project Alternative and an HST Alternative for the Merced to Fresno corridor. These alternatives are briefly described below.

### 1.2.1 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative (No Project or No Build) represents the conditions in the corridor as it existed in 2009, and as it would exist based on programmed and funded improvements to the intercity transportation system and other reasonably foreseeable projects through 2035, taking into account the following sources of information: the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) for all modes of travel, airport plans, intercity passenger rail plans, and city and county plans.

### 1.2.2 HST Alternative

The Authority proposes to construct, operate, and maintain an electric-powered steel-wheel-on-steel-rail HST system, about 800 miles long, capable of operating at speeds of 220 mph on dedicated, mostly grade-separated tracks, with state-of-the-art safety, signaling, and automated train control systems. The Merced to Fresno HST Project consists of a 60-mile corridor of the 800 mile system from the City of Merced to the City of Fresno. The project will include a station in Merced and Fresno. The station in Fresno will be analyzed in the EIR/EIS for the Fresno to Bakersfield Section of the HST System.

Figure 1-2 is a map of the Merced to Fresno Section of the HST system. The project will also include an up to 200 acre major maintenance facility at a location to be determined. Further engineering studies to be undertaken as part of this EIR/EIS process will examine and refine alignments in the BNSF and UPRR corridors. In addition, alternative sites for right-of-way maintenance and train storage facilities will be evaluated in the Merced to Fresno HST corridor.

As part of the Bay Area to Central Valley HST Program EIR/EIS, the Authority and FRA selected the UPRR railroad alignment through the portion of the Central Valley studied (just north of Madera and just south of Stockton) as the preferred alternative. This Project EIR/EIS will also evaluate the BNSF Railway railroad alignment in this part of the Central Valley because of the uncertainty of negotiating with the UPRR for access to some of its right-of-way and will continue investigating alignments/linkages to a potential maintenance facility at the former Castle Air Force Base. The BNSF alignment from Madera to Fresno was selected in the Statewide Program EIR/EIS. As defined in the Statewide Program EIR/EIS, this alignment uses the UPRR corridor through the urban area of Fresno. The HST would operate in this area at speeds up to 220 mph on tracks separate from the existing BNSF and UPRR tracks. The entire alignment would be grade separated. Further engineering studies to be undertaken as part of this EIR/EIS process will examine and refine alignments in the BNSF and UPRR corridors. In addition,



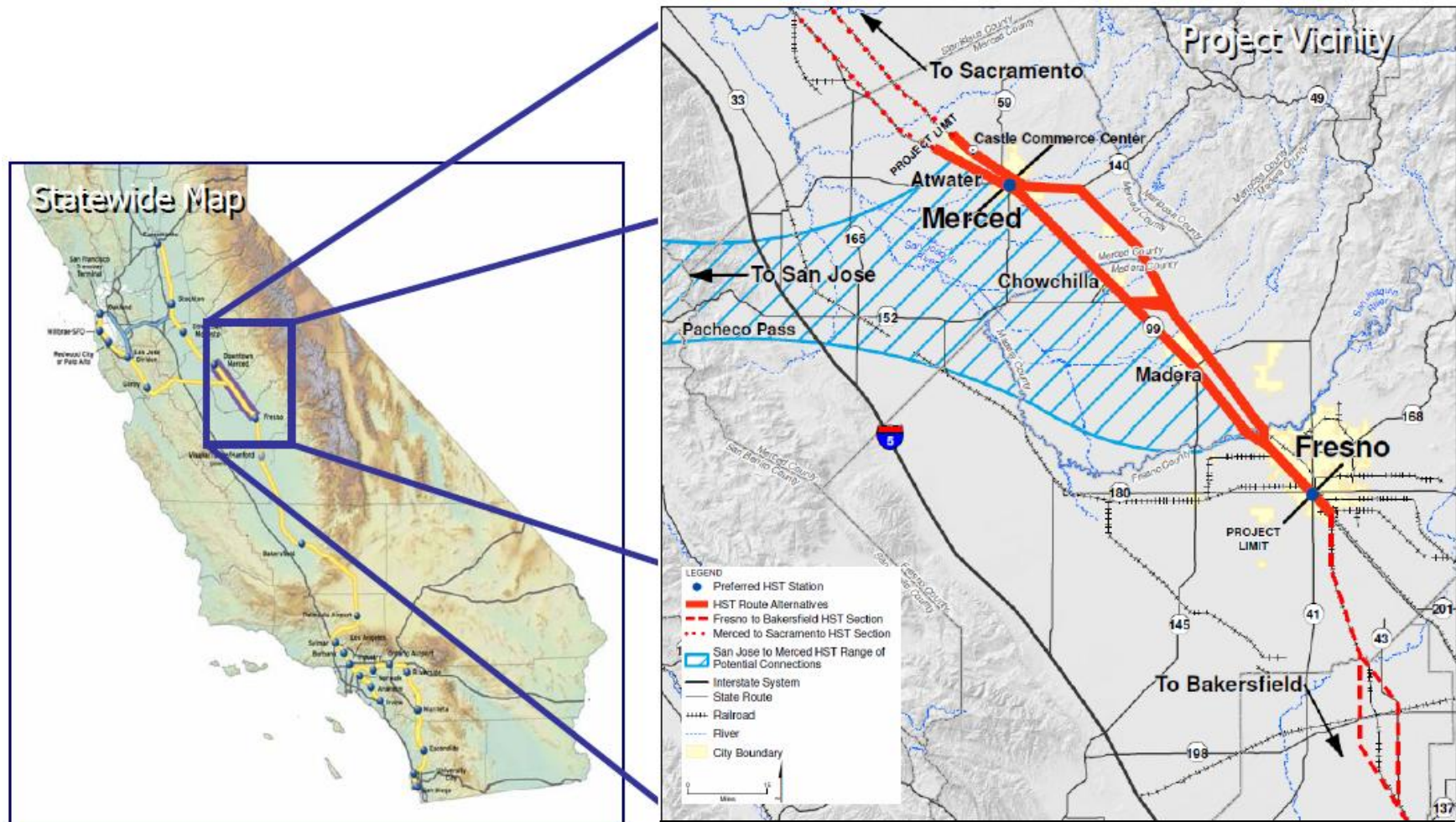


Figure 1-2

Merced to Fresno Section HST Project Area

alternative sites for right-of-way maintenance, train storage facilities, and a light or heavy maintenance and repair facility will be evaluated in the Merced to Fresno HST project area.

### 1.3 Purpose of Scoping

Public scoping is an important element in the process of determining the focus and content of an EIR/EIS. Scoping helps to identify the range of actions, alternatives, environmental effects, and mitigation measures to be analyzed in depth, and helps eliminate from detailed study those issues that are not pertinent to the final decision on the proposed project. Scoping is also an effective way to bring together and address the concerns of the public, affected agencies, and other interested parties. Significant issues may be identified through public and agency comments. The Council on Environmental Quality Regulations Section 1501.7 and CEQA section 21083.9 describe scoping as required by NEPA and CEQA.

Scoping is not conducted to resolve differences concerning the merits of a project or to anticipate the ultimate decision on a proposal. Rather scoping helps ensure that a comprehensive and focused EIR/EIS will be prepared that informs the decisionmaking process.

The intent of the California High-Speed Train Project Merced to Fresno Section scoping process is to:

- Inform public agencies and interested members of the public about the proposed project, including compliance with NEPA and CEQA requirements, and the FRA's and Authority's actions in relation to it.
- Assist with identifying a range of alignments and station locations along the Merced to Fresno Section that may be considered in the EIR/EIS.
- Assist with identifying the range of concerns and project-related issues to be considered in the EIR/EIS.
- Assist with identifying mitigation measures, strategies, and approaches to mitigation that may be useful and explored further in the EIR/EIS.
- Develop an expanded mailing list of agencies and individuals interested in the future actions relative to the EIR/EIS.

The scoping process and the input gathered during the scoping period are documented herein for the Merced to Fresno Section Project-Level EIR/EIS.

### 1.4 Notification of EIR/EIS Scoping

The official start of the EIR/EIS process was the issuance of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Merced to Bakersfield Section HST Project EIR/EIS (Appendix A) that was distributed to the State Clearinghouse; local, regional, and state agencies; and interested public and agencies (Appendix D). The federal process began with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) (Appendix B) in the *Federal Register*. The NOP was distributed on February 24, 2009, and the NOI was published in the *Federal Register* on March 16, 2009.

The NOP and NOI discussed the purpose of the study, the project limits, the need for agency input, potential environmental impacts of the project, contact name for additional information regarding the project, and a description of alternatives to be considered. In addition, an invitation letter was sent directly to representatives at the federal, state, and local agencies, elected officials, and tribes on the project mailing list inviting them to do the following:

- Provide written comments on scoping through the NOP and NOI, including advising FRA and the Authority of the applicable permit and environmental review requirements of the agency and the scope and content of the environmental information germane to the agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.
- Attend the scoping meetings.
- Distribute scoping meeting information or post information about the upcoming scoping meetings and post information provided on agency website or newsletter.

Public notification for the scoping meetings was made through a scoping meeting announcement (Appendix C) distributed to those on a mailing list and email list derived from past work and current project outreach and to property owners within 50 feet of each side of the proposed alignments and 500 feet of proposed station locations. Approximately 2,980 notifications were mailed for the Merced to Bakersfield corridor. The proposed alignments and station locations are based on the Statewide Programmatic EIR/EIS and the Bay Area to Central Valley Programmatic EIR/EIS. See Appendix D for the scoping notice distribution lists. Notification was also provided on the Authority's website. Table 1-1 lists the publications and dates for the display advertisements and legal notices as well as articles and editorials published prior to and during the scoping process. Appendix K includes copies of articles and editorials.

**Table 1-1**  
Published Public Notifications within the Merced to Fresno Section

Publication	Display Ad	Legal Notice	Articles/Editorials
Atwater Signal	March 13	March 13	
Atwater Times	March 5, March 12	March 5, March 12	
Chowchilla News	March 11	March 11	
Comtex News Network			March 14
El Sol (Spanish)	March 13	March 13	
Fresno Bee	March 14	March 14	March 5
Fresno COG Outlook			March
Madera Tribune	March 5, March 12	March 5, March 11	
Merced County Times	March 5, March 12	March 5, March 12	March 26
Merced Sun-Star	March 4, March 11	March 5, March 11	March 7, 17, 19
Reed Print, Inc.	March 18	March 18	
Selma Enterprise	March 18	March 18	
Technology Marketing Corporation (tmcnet.com)			March 16
Note: All dates are 2009.			

The Authority and FRA subsequently determined that the environmental effects of the HST System from Merced to Bakersfield are more appropriately assessed in two separate EIR/EIS documents, one from Merced to Fresno and another for Fresno to Bakersfield. An NOP and NOI amending the environmental process were issued on September 29, 2009 and October 1, 2009, respectively.

## 1.5 Scoping Process

The scoping activities for the California High-Speed Train System Merced to Fresno Section were conducted between February 24 and April 10, 2009 (scoping period). The scoping period for the amended environmental process extended from September 29<sup>th</sup> to October 30<sup>th</sup>. The geographical extent and complexity of the proposed project necessitated scoping meetings be held in several locations in the project corridor. Three public scoping meetings were held in the Merced to Fresno HST project corridor between March 18, 2009, and March 25, 2009, as shown in Table 1-2. Two additional meetings were held in the Merced to Bakersfield HST project corridor for what is now the Fresno to Bakersfield Section HST Project EIR/EIS. All meetings were held between 3:00 and 7:00 p.m. to allow representatives from agencies and the public the opportunity to participate. Scoping meetings were held in an open house format, allowing people to arrive at any time to obtain information and provide input. Project team members were available throughout the meetings to respond to questions and record comments. The deadline for submitting scoping comments was April 10, 2009, although the Authority has considered and included comments it received up to the preparation of this report. Public scoping meetings were not held for the amended environmental process. The scoping meetings held in March 2009 for the Merced to Bakersfield corridor are an important component of the scoping process for the Merced to Fresno HST Project EIR/EIS for both the State and Federal environmental review.

**Table 1-2**  
Scoping Meeting Locations within the Merced to Fresno Section

Date	City	Location/Address
March 18	Merced	Merced Community Senior Center, 755 W. 15th St., Merced
March 19	Madera	Madera County Fairgrounds, 1850 W. Cleveland Ave., Madera
March 25	Fresno	Fresno Convention Center Exhibit Hall, 848 M St., Fresno

Materials developed for use in the scoping process included the following, which can be reviewed in Appendices A, B, C, F, and G, respectively:

- Copy of the NOP
- Copy of the NOI
- Scoping meeting announcement mailer and scoping information brochure
- Information boards displayed on easels
- Scoping period comment card

Members of the public; affected federal, state, and local agencies; interest groups; and other interested parties participated in the scoping process by attending the meetings and/or providing written and verbal comments or recommendations concerning project alignment and station alternatives, maintenance facility location alternatives, potential environmental impacts to be analyzed in the EIR/EIS, and other project-related issues.

Although scoping is a distinct stage in the EIR/EIS process, public involvement activities will extend throughout preparation of the EIR/EIS. These activities allow for interaction and exchange of information and discussion of issues and concerns among the public, agencies, and EIR/EIS preparers throughout the study process.





## 2.0 Public and Agency Involvement During Scoping

Throughout the scoping period, the Authority and FRA encouraged public input through a variety of activities. As noted, the Authority issued the NOP and the FRA published the NOI in the *Federal Register*, initiating the scoping process.

Agency representatives attended the scoping meetings and numerous letters in response to the NOP/NOI were received. Members of the public and representatives from organizations also attended the meetings, some providing comments at the meetings.

### 2.1 Summary of Noticed Scoping Meetings

The scoping meetings were open to both the general public and agencies. Attendance lists for the scoping meetings are included in Appendix E. Copies of the materials provided at the scoping meetings are included in Appendix F, Public Scoping Meeting Display Boards; and Appendix G, Public Scoping Comment Card and Handouts.

Scoping comment cards were provided at each of the meetings for attendees to provide comments on the materials and information presented in Appendix G. Written scoping comments and questions collected at the meetings, written on flip charts and large maps at the meetings, or submitted via mail or through the Authority's internet website and verbal comments recorded at the scoping meetings through a court reporter are included in Appendix H and Appendix I, respectively, and summarized below in Section 3, Scoping Summary of Issues. Agency responses to the NOP and NOI are included in Appendix J and summarized in Section 3.4.

Approximately 271 people attended the Merced, Madera, and Fresno scoping meetings, approximately 144 comments were submitted by individuals and organizations, and 31 agencies provided comments. The scoping meetings are summarized in the following sections.

#### 2.1.1 Merced, March 18, 2009

On March 18, 2009, the Authority held a scoping meeting at the Merced Community Senior Center from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. A total of 176 people signed in at the meeting, including representatives from the City of Merced, Merced County, City of Chowchilla, City of Livingston, City of Modesto, Madera County, Madera County Transportation Commission, Merced County Association of Governments, Merced Irrigation District, City of Atwater, University of California – Merced, Merced College, Mariposa County, Merced Redevelopment Agency, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Merced County Farm Bureau. A representative for State Senator Jeff Denham and Assemblywoman Cathleen Galgani also attended. The Greater Merced High-Speed Rail Committee, Sierra Club, Valley Land Alliance, Defenders of Wildlife, and Merced County Asthma Coalition were also represented.

Since Merced is at the junction of another component of the statewide HST project which is also undergoing scoping, the San Jose to Merced Section, this meeting was a joint scoping meeting for both sections. This enabled area stakeholders to attend a single meeting for their area and minimized confusion about the projects.

Of those that signed in, approximately 24 individuals indicated that they were most interested in the San Jose to Merced Section. Other attendees indicated interest in both, interest in Merced to Bakersfield only, or did not indicate an interest. Although the Altamont Section is an independent project from the HST system being pursued by the Authority at this time, a project representative with information about that project



*Scoping meeting at the Merced Community Senior Center.*

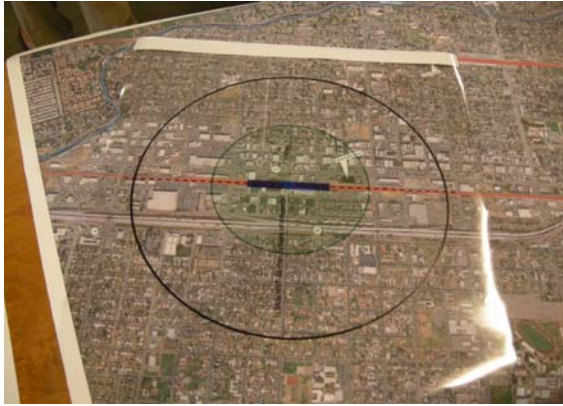
was present at the scoping meeting due to the project's proximity to the Merced to Fresno and San Jose to Merced sections.

The meeting was in open house format, with information stations and staff available to answer questions through informal discussions. A welcome table provided an area to sign in, receive meeting handouts, ask questions, and receive general orientation. Attendees arrived at different times throughout the meeting. Seven separate stations with poster displays on easels provided information for attendees. These stations provided information on the California High-Speed Train Project, High-Speed Trains, Merced to Fresno HST Section, Alternatives Analysis, Environmental Process, San Jose to Merced High-speed Train Section, and Altamont Section. A 25-minute video presentation providing background information on the California HST project and the Merced to Bakersfield corridor played in a continuous loop.

Two comment stations were available at the meeting. One station provided a place for people to sit down to compose their comments on the comment cards supplied or to give comments verbally to a court reporter. The second comment station consisted of two tables with large aerial maps of the project area with lines representing a proposed alignment along the BNSF and UPRR railroad corridors based on the Statewide Programmatic EIR/EIS and the Bay Area to Central Valley Programmatic EIR/EIS. The maps also included circles sized to scale to represent potential maintenance facility locations. A larger scale map was provided of the Merced area to facilitate discussions regarding potential station locations.



*Comment stations at meetings in Madera (top) and Merced provided people with a place to offer comments.*



*Large-scale maps of the Merced area with tools to illustrate station area and rail alignment facilitated discussion.*



Marking pens were available for attendees to use to write comments on the map or indicate specific natural or community resources or areas of concern. The maps also included circles sized to scale to represent potential maintenance facility locations. A larger-scale map was provided of the Merced area to facilitate discussions regarding potential station locations. Moveable track curve and station area templates were available for both the large alignment maps and the station area map to enable participants to understand how the proposed facilities could be sited in other areas along the project corridor.

For native Spanish speakers, a staff member fluent in Spanish was present to assist with answering questions and submitting comments if needed.

### 2.1.2 Madera, March 19, 2009

On March 19, 2009, the Authority held a scoping meeting at the Madera County Fairgrounds from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. Forty-four people signed in at the meeting, including representatives from Madera County, City of Madera, Madera High School, Madera County Transportation Commission, Caltrans, and the Chowchilla Chamber of Commerce.

The meeting was in an open house format, with information stations and staff available to answer questions through informal discussions. A welcome table provided an area to sign in, receive meeting handouts, ask questions, and receive general orientation. Attendees arrived at different times throughout the meeting. Five separate stations with poster displays provided information for attendees. These stations provided information on the California High-Speed Train Project, High-Speed Trains, Merced to Bakersfield High-speed Train Section, Alternatives Analysis, and Environmental Process. A 25-minute video presentation providing background information on the California HST project and the Merced to Bakersfield corridor played in a continuous loop.

Two comment stations were available at the meeting. One station provided a place for people to sit down to compose their comments on the comment cards supplied or to give comments verbally to the court reporter.



In the center of the room, two tables with large aerial maps of the project area were provided with lines representing a proposed alignment along the BNSF and UPRR railroad corridors based on the Statewide Programmatic EIR/EIS and the Bay Area to Central Valley Programmatic EIR/EIS. Marking pens were available for attendees to use to write comments on the map or indicate specific natural or community resources or areas of concern. The maps also included circles sized to scale to represent potential maintenance facility locations. A larger-scale map was provided of the Merced area to facilitate discussions regarding potential station locations. Moveable curve and station area templates were available for both the large alignment maps and the station area map to enable participants to understand how the proposed facilities could be sited in other areas along the project corridor.

For native Spanish speakers, a staff member fluent in Spanish was present to assist with answering questions and submitting comments if needed.

### **2.1.3 Fresno, March 25, 2009**

On March 25, 2009, the Authority held a scoping meeting at the Fresno Convention Center from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. Fifty-one people signed in at the meeting, including representatives from Caltrans, California Public Utilities Commission, City of Clovis, City of Sanger, and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The meeting was presented in an open house format, with information stations and staff available to answer questions through informal discussions. A welcome table provided an area to sign in, receive meeting handouts, ask questions, and receive general orientation. Attendees arrived at different times throughout the meeting.

Five individual stations with poster displays provided information for attendees. These included large posters presenting information on the California High-Speed Train Project, High-Speed Trains, Merced to Bakersfield High-speed Train Section, Alternatives Analysis, and Environmental Process. A 4-minute video presentation providing background information on the California HST project and the Merced to Bakersfield corridor played in a continuous loop.

Three comment stations were available at the meeting. Two stations provided a place for people to sit down to compose their comments on the comment cards supplied. At a third station, people could provide comments verbally to a court reporter. In the center of the space two tables were set up to display large aerial maps of the project area with lines representing the EIR/EIS programmatic HST alignments through the Central Valley. Marking pens were available for attendees to use to write comments on the map or indicate specific resource areas. The maps included circles sized to scale to represent potential maintenance facility locations. Moveable curve and station area templates were available to enable participants to understand how proposed facilities could be sited in other areas along the project corridor. A map of the Merced to Fresno Section of the proposed HST was also available for review by the public.

A professional Spanish interpreter was present to assist native Spanish speakers submit comments and answer any questions. Hard-copy meeting materials were also available in Spanish.

## **2.2 Summary of Outreach Activities**

The scoping period officially began February 24, 2009, with the receipt of the NOP at the State Clearinghouse. However, outreach to stakeholders in the Merced to Fresno corridor began earlier. Beginning outreach early improved awareness of the project so that, as the Authority began the scoping period, the stakeholders could be better prepared to offer pertinent comments. Activities included

outreach to business and community groups, early agency coordination, and elected official briefings, and are listed below in Table 2-1.

**Table 2-1**  
Summary of Outreach Activities

Date	Organization/Individual	Topic
December 10, 2008	Madera County Staff	Merced to Fresno Section planning, upcoming scoping process
December 10, 2008	City of Madera Staff	Merced to Fresno Section planning, upcoming scoping process
December 11, 2008	City of Chowchilla Staff	Merced to Fresno Section planning, upcoming scoping process
December 11, 2008	City of Merced Staff	Merced to Fresno Section planning, upcoming scoping process
December 11, 2008	Merced County Staff	Merced to Fresno Section planning, upcoming scoping process
January 13, 2009	Meeting with Fresno Mayor	HST in Fresno, invite to scoping meeting
January 23, 2009	City of Fresno Staff	HST in Fresno, city/regional issues
January 27, 2009	Centennial Corridor Open House – Caltrans/TRIP	HST in Central Valley, invite to scoping meeting
January 29, 2009	Ahron Hakimi, Caltrans Corridor Project Manager, TRIP office	HST in Central Valley, invite to scoping meeting
February 6, 2009	Keith Bergthold, City of Fresno	Station and maintenance facility criteria and moving forward on rail consolidation and HST, discuss scoping meetings
February 6, 2009	Clark Thompson, Fresno COG and Fresno Area Residents for Rail Consolidation (FARRC)	HST and rail consolidation, discuss scoping meetings
February 6, 2009	City of Fresno Staff	Downtown station planning and alignments, discuss scoping meetings
February 10, 2009	Fresno Business Council	California High-Speed Rail Authority PowerPoint presentation, invite to scoping meeting
February 12, 2009	Cross Valley Rail Joint Powers Authority	California High-Speed Rail Authority PowerPoint presentation, invite to scoping meeting
February 12, 2009	City of Chowchilla City Council meeting gave general HST overview presentation	HST overview presentation, extend invitations to attend scoping meetings on March 18 and 19
February 19, 2009	Madera County Supervisor Frank Bigelow	HST in Madera, Central Valley, invite to scoping meeting
February 24, 2009	Madera Mayor Sam Armentrout	HST in Madera, Central Valley, invite to scoping meeting

**Table 2-1**  
Summary of Outreach Activities

Date	Organization/Individual	Topic
March 3, 2009	Sons of Retirement	California High-Speed Rail Authority PowerPoint presentation
March 4, 2009	Noah Lor, Merced City Council	HST in Merced, Central Valley
March 4, 2009	Supervisor Hub Walsh, Merced County	HST in Merced, Central Valley
March 9, 2009	Supervisors Moss and Wheeler, Madera County	HST in Madera, Central Valley
March 9, 2009	Patricia Taylor, Madera County Transportation Commission	HST in Central Valley
March 9, 2009	Meeting with Supervisor Pedrozo, Merced County	HST in Merced, Central Valley
March 11, 2009	Presentation to Merced support group including Mayor of Merced, Merced County Supervisors, Laotian Community representatives, business community representatives, City of Merced staff, representative from Senator Denham's office, representative from Representative Cardoza's office, President of Merced College, and UC - Merced Vice Chancellor	HST in Merced, Central Valley
March 12, 2009	Madera County and City of Madera staff.	HST in Madera County, Central Valley
March 9, 2009	Madera County Supervisor Vern Moss & Tom Wheeler	HST in Madera, Central Valley, invite to scoping meeting
March 9, 2009	Madera City Councilman Robert Poythress	HST in Madera, Central Valley
March 10, 2009	Fresno County Board of Supervisors	California High-Speed Rail Authority PowerPoint Presentation, invite to scoping meeting
March 11, 2009	City of Fresno Council President, Cynthia Sterling	HST in Fresno, invite to scoping meeting
March 12, 2009	Madera Supervisor Max Rodriguez	HST in Madera, invite to scoping meeting
March 12, 2009	Madera County Resources Management Agency	HST in Madera, invite to scoping meeting
March 17, 2009	Fresno City Council	California High-Speed Rail Authority PowerPoint presentation, invite to scoping meeting
March 19, 2009	City of Chowchilla Mayor and staff meeting	HST in Central Valley

**Table 2-1**  
Summary of Outreach Activities

Date	Organization/Individual	Topic
March 26, 2009	Caltrans Statewide Environmental Managers Meeting	California High-Speed Rail Authority PowerPoint presentation
October 8, 2009	Public meeting, Merced Community Center	Summarize the comments received during scoping and discuss the additional alignment alternatives that were developed in response and which may be carried out for further detailed study.





### 3.0 Scoping Summary of Issues

The goals of project scoping include identification of the range of alternatives and environmental effects that will require analysis in the EIR/EIS. The Merced to Fresno Section HST scoping process identified issues with proposed alignments and stations, suggestions for new or modified alignments, stations, and maintenance facilities, and areas of potential concern related to the proposed high-speed train system. The following is a summary of the comments received during the scoping process. Comments were submitted in the following ways:

- Comment forms submitted at scoping meetings
- Verbally to court reporters
- Map mark-ups and flip-chart notes
- Personal comment letters
- Mailed comment forms
- E-mails
- Agency letters

The flip-chart comments reiterated comments submitted on comment forms at the scoping meetings. The Authority received over 144 written and verbal scoping comments. Several individuals submitted two or more comments. Comments are reproduced in Appendices H and I and should be referred to for the complete content.

The summary is divided into three major topic areas. Comments regarding proposed alternatives and station locations are summarized first, followed by a summary of comments related to environmental concerns and, finally, a summary of comments related to technical or engineering concerns. Each of these topic areas is organized by project segment. In addition, Table 3-1 summarizes the written comments received by topic and type of commenter (agency, organization, or public and property owners), and Table 3-2 summarizes verbal comments.

In general, the comments received addressed the following topics:

- The location of stations
- The location of the HST alignment
- The location of the proposed maintenance facility
- The benefits of HST, including air quality, congestion relief, and economic development
- Connections to local transit
- General support for the project
- Fast tracking of the project
- Agricultural impacts
- Natural resource impacts
- Noise impacts
- Questions about cost and financing of the system
- The use of U.S. labor and U.S. products for HST construction
- Power source and requirements of the system
- Economic growth issues
- Benefits/impacts on local businesses
- Employment opportunities
- Ridership estimates
- Property acquisition
- Displacement of people
- Potential devaluation of property
- Rail consolidation

## 3.1 Alternatives

The following discussion summarizes public comments received pertaining to route, alignment, station, and maintenance base facility location preferences for the Merced to Fresno Section of the proposed HST project. Some comments pertaining to the San Jose to Merced HST project are also summarized below, because they were provided at the joint Merced scoping meeting and because of the complexities of this segment's connection with the Merced to Fresno Section.

### 3.1.1 Stations

Most commenters expressing a preference for a station location preferred downtown Merced. The Merced City Manager, the Merced Boosters Club, and the Citizens for the Betterment of Merced County submitted letters in support of locating the station in Merced. One comment specifically suggested a station at 16th and M Street in Merced. A couple of comments did not specifically refer to downtown Merced, but stated that a station should be in downtown or urban areas. One commenter asked that the HST run closer to the University of California, Merced. One commenter stated that the station should be away from cities, and this was also noted on the Madera scoping meeting flipchart. Another commenter expressed concern that a rural station would encourage sprawl, burdening water resources. Several commenters requested a Chowchilla station, with specific locations suggested including the northwest corner of the intersection of the BNSF Railroad tracks and Avenue 26 (the same commenter suggested BNSF Railroad tracks and Highway 152, but these do not intersect, so assume meant Avenue 26), Highways 99 and 152, or midway between Merced and Madera. One such commenter specifically noted Chowchilla's good quality of life and good schools in support of locating the station there. Another commenter emphasized the importance of connection to existing transportation services in determining station locations. One commenter suggested communicating the logic behind station locations in terms of the need to locate near higher population centers with patrons using other public transportation to get to the stations.

The majority of those commenting on the location of a station in Fresno preferred a station in the downtown area, west of SR 99; some specifically stated the station should be south of Grizzly Stadium, between G and H streets and Mono and Tulare avenues, near Chinatown, and next to the historic Southern Pacific railroad station. Approximately 12 such comments were received. Other comments stated the need to locate the station near transit and other ground transportation and provide a connection to or accommodate potential future relocation of the Fresno Air Terminal. One comment mentioned integration with the China Town area.

Regarding the San Jose to Merced connection to the Central Valley, several commenters suggested reconsidering a station in Los Banos.

### 3.1.2 Route

Two public comments expressed a preference for a route along the UPRR corridor. This preference was also written on the Madera scoping meeting flip chart. Four members of the general public and the City of Merced City Manager submitted written comments expressing a preference for the UPRR alignment. Several commenters listed environmental impacts associated with the BNSF alternative, discussed below under Environmental Concerns. One commenter stated that HST in Chowchilla violates the city's master plan. The Union Pacific Railroad stated that it is not in the best interest of UPRR to permit any proposed HST alignment or facility in their right-of-way and that it would not voluntarily do so. No other commenter expressed a preference between the BNSF or UPRR corridors. The Madera County Board of Supervisors wrote in their October 26, 2009 comment letter that they prefer a route along the BNSF with a UPRR link north of the City of Chowchilla is preferred and oppose a route along the UPRR in the cities of Madera and Chowchilla. The Chowchilla Water District and Madera County Farm Bureau have concerns regarding the route west of the UPRR.

Commenters generally agreed with an alignment that brings the HST into downtown Fresno. One commenter stated that tracks should be located below grade through Fresno and another stated that tracks should be underground through all cities. One commenter suggested using the Union Pacific tracks through Fresno and another stated that the alignment should be along I-5 to the west.

The Fresno Area Residents for Rail Consolidation (FARRC) advocates an HST route to the west along with relocation of the UPRR tracks and rail yard, using the vacated UPRR right-of-way for BNSF's new double track corridor to be used by Amtrak and two local HST tracks and downtown multi-modal station. FARRC believes that HST express service through downtown Fresno will create noise and disruption from construction, whereas a western alignment and relocation of the UPRR has safety advantages, causes less disruption to freight railroads, and provides for locating the maintenance facility at the UPRR rail yard in central Fresno.

Approximately six comments regarding the Pacheco Pass alignment were received, most of which expressed a preference for the Altamont Pass alignment over the Pacheco Pass alignment. The Defenders of Wildlife is opposed to any alignment that passes through or adjacent to the Grasslands Ecological Area (GEA), because it would create a barrier to wildlife movement, cause noise and vibration and light impacts on wildlife, affect listed species, affect critical habitat, and induce sprawl. Instead, the Defenders of Wildlife suggested other routes that consolidate transportation infrastructure within metropolitan areas such as the Altamont Pass alignment. Two additional comments expressed opposition to the Pacheco Pass route due to ecosystem impacts, farmland impacts, sprawl inducement, and concerns that a Los Banos stop will be added in the future. Two commenters supported the Pacheco Pass route. However, one of those suggested that the Authority continue to pursue interconnectivity with the existing ACE and BART services in the Altamont Pass area.

## **New Alternatives Proposed**

A greenfield alternative east of the BNSF rail corridor was proposed, west of Planada, Le Grand, and Clovis between Merced and Fresno. This same commenter submitted a subsequent comment suggesting that the HST be placed along a proposed Highway 65 extension or Eastside Freeway, with a rail link to a maintenance facility at the former Castle Air Force Base. Alternative alignments proposed by the City of Chowchilla and Madera County are discussed below in Section 3.4, Agency Responses to NOP/NOI. Two commenters proposed placing the HST in the I-5 corridor through the Valley to avoid property impacts or reduce costs, one specifically suggesting tracks branching out into Fresno and Merced.

## **Maintenance Facility**

Most of the comments regarding the location of the maintenance facility preferred the Castle Air Force Base location due to the availability of existing facilities and use of land that is already developed rather than agricultural lands. Over 10 such comments were received, and this preference was noted three times on the Merced scoping meeting flipchart. The Merced City Manager, Atwater City Councilman Joe Rivero, the Merced Boosters Club, and the Citizens for the Betterment of Merced County submitted comments in support of locating the maintenance facility at Castle Air Force Base. Staff from the Merced County Department of Workforce Investment submitted comments in support of locating the maintenance facility at the former Castle Air Force Base and stated the Department's readiness to provide the workforce necessary for the project, noting its existing partnerships with the Merced College and the adoption of transportation as an industry cluster of focus.

A couple of commenters suggested locating the facility in Chowchilla near the BNSF tracks and Avenue 26 (comment stated Highway 152, but Highway 152 and the BNSF do not intersect and same commenter previously proposed using their property at Avenue 26 and BNSF). One commenter suggested locating the facility south of Highway 152 in Chowchilla. A comment written on the Merced scoping meeting flipchart advocated locating the facility in Chowchilla, stating that a location at Avenue 24 is not acceptable. Many comments reference the availability of a workforce and opportunities for training that

workforce at local educational institutions and the area's need for jobs. Five commenters preferred to have the maintenance facility in Fresno or Fresno County.

## 3.2 Environmental Concerns

The following discussion summarizes public comments received pertaining to environmental concerns for the Merced to Fresno Section of the proposed HST project. The list below includes all environmental issues mentioned.

- Visual impacts: project in general, stations, elevated track, glare
- Air quality: if project not implemented, HST's potential emissions, dust
- Impacts on agricultural resources
- Conversion of agricultural land, Williamson Act compliance
- Impacts on environmental justice communities
- Community cohesion
- Fiscal impacts
- Construction impacts
- Safety
- Global warming (if HST is not implemented)
- Growth inducement
- Water resource impacts
- Harm to historic structures
- Hazardous materials impacts
- Electromagnetic field impacts on humans and animals
- Listed species and habitat impacts
- Noise impacts
- Transportation impacts: crossings, blocked roads, blocked intersections, congestion if HST is not implemented
- Impacts on Amtrak

### 3.2.1 Project-wide

Comments were received that expressed concerns that apply to the entire HST system. A few comments noted economic impact concerns: one commenter asked about impacts on Amtrak, a couple of commenters expressed concern regarding cost overruns or fare shortfalls resulting in increased taxes, a few commenters asked about the price of a ticket, and a couple of commenters referenced hiring local contractors. One commenter stated that the project should use materials made in the U.S.

A few comments emphasized the need for sufficient parking, particularly affordable parking and long-term parking, at the stations. Another commenter stated that all stations should provide for childcare facilities nearby to make it easier for working parents to use the system.

UPRR stated that its rail network in the Bay Area and Central Valley is vital to the economic health of the nation and use of the UPRR right-of-way threatens the shippers that use its services and the economy. In addition, UPRR noted that many shippers have loading and storage facilities adjacent to the right-of-way and locating HST in the UPRR right-of-way would potentially terminate its ability to serve these and future shippers. In addition, UPRR stated that its Fresno freight yard is crucial to providing its service and is not available in whole or in part for HST and will not be made voluntarily available.

The California Farm Bureau Federation (Farm Bureau) submitted the following comments on the scope of the EIR/EIS pertaining to agricultural impact analysis:

- Complete an identification of agricultural resources, including incorporation of the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program maps maintained by the California Department of Conservation, the acreage of farmland that will be converted or impacted, any other changes which could result in the conversion of agricultural to nonagricultural use, and discussion of areas outside the Important Farmland Map boundaries based on definitions in the Williamson Act.
- Consider the impacts of construction of ancillary facilities and supporting infrastructure, as well as growth-inducing impacts as the combination of new transportation infrastructure linking people to jobs and cities in combination with lower cost lands such as agricultural lands can lead to conversion of agricultural lands.
- Describe measures to fully mitigate impacts on agricultural land, including provision of sufficient funding to replace farmland loss with similar or better agricultural land through permanent easement.
- Comply with the Williamson Act, map the location of agricultural preserves and Williamson Act contracted land, provide acreage and type of Williamson Act contract land directly or indirectly impacted by the project, and analyze impacts of acquisition of areas under Williamson Act contracts on nearby properties also under contract.
- Adhere to the requirements under the Williamson Act regarding acquisition of Williamson Act contracted properties and maximize use of property already in public ownership.
- Analyze impacts of the project groundwater quality and quantity, including impacts on water supply otherwise available for production agriculture as well as alternatives for mitigation, such as increased recharge.
- Analyze social and economic impacts on the agriculture industry and rural communities, including loss of jobs, sales tax revenue and subsequent reduction of social services, and loss of agriculture-related businesses.

The organization Transportation Involves Everyone (TIE) questioned several Authority projections for the system, including stating that the air travel diversion estimates are too high, greenhouse gas reduction estimated is inconsequential and too costly for the amount of reduction, and ridership projections are too high. TIE also noted that cost estimates increased by 50 percent and stated that additional taxes will be necessary, because the revenues from ridership will not be enough to cover the costs.

### 3.2.2 Merced to Fresno

Numerous comments expressed support for the HST project, and many of these cited the benefits of HST, including economic benefits and job creation, air quality improvement, traffic congestion relief, and energy conservation. The Merced County Economic Development Corporation and the Greater Merced High-Speed Rail Committee submitted comments in support of the project. A few commenters noted the benefits to UC - Merced students, including the ability to access jobs and internships and travel home. Comments regarding locating the maintenance facility in the corridor specifically noted the benefits of bringing jobs to the area. A couple of the comments supporting stations in urban areas or Merced specifically noted fewer impacts on agricultural land.

Various environmental concerns were mentioned in the comments received. These included dust control, conversion of agricultural land, potential impacts on historic structures such as the railroad depot in Fresno, hazardous spills, and growth inducement. Commenters expressed concern over transportation impacts due to HST crossings of roads and the potential to block roads and intersections. A number of commenters expressed concern about the level of noise the high-speed trains may generate and how sensitive receptors will be identified. Concerns about railroad "whistles" were voiced. One commenter stated that noise is higher from elevated tracks, and sound measures should be taken when two or more trains pass at the speed designated for various areas. Several commenters recorded concerns about aesthetics. In general, those that commented had concerns about how HST facilities may affect existing

landscapes. Two commenters remarked that the design of the railroad facilities needs to be considered. In addition, there were a number of comments related to economic issues, including cost and financing of the system, use of U.S. labor and U.S. products, economic growth potential, benefits and impacts on local businesses, and employment opportunities.

Concerns regarding displacement of residents and devaluation of property were also expressed. Three commenters expressed specific concerns regarding impacts to their property. One property owner was unclear how the project impacts his property near the Highway 152 and Highway 99 area. Another property owner was concerned about the project splitting his property on either side of what would be Henry Miller Road if it were extended, specifically due to the need to move farming equipment from one side to the other and his ability to apply pesticides once the train is operating. A third property owner stated that the proposed route would displace the four homes and dairy farm on his property and requested the opportunity to discuss it with project staff. One commenter stated that the location of HST in Chowchilla violates the City's master plan and separates the west and east sides of the city, requiring miles of travel to go from one side to the other. This commenter also questioned the number of people in Chowchilla that will use HST and how it will benefit the people of Chowchilla, stating that it will not serve workers traveling from Chowchilla to Merced, Madera, or Fresno on daily work commutes. One commenter expressed concern about the proximity of the HST due to the safety of homes and livestock in a derailment.

Two commenters objected to the BNSF alternative, citing increased cost due to length, endangered species associated with vernal pools and upland grassland areas, sprawl-inducing impacts, impacts on prime farmland along the BNSF corridor. Another commenter also noted the presence of endangered species along the BNSF and existing noise and pollution along Highway 99 as reasons to select the UPRR route. One commenter expressed concern about the safety of an elevated facility in the event of a derailment, and noted that an elevated system would also dominate the skyline of the urban communities.

One commenter noted the likelihood of hazardous materials near railroad facilities and stated that a complete soil and groundwater analysis is needed in the EIR/EIS. This commenter also expressed concern regarding desiccation of vegetation from high velocity winds, which could damage gardens, natural grasslands, and farmlands; encourage grass fires; and result in more water use by residents and agriculture. Additional concerns raised included potential impacts on groundwater from tunneling and the need for a U.S. Geological Survey hydrogeologist to conduct hydrogeological mapping, electromagnetic field exposure to wildlife and people, and high-voltage direct-current line effects.

Chevron Environmental Management Company (CEMC) submitted a comment notifying the Authority that formerly active crude oil transportation pipelines of the Tidewater Associated Oil Company and Standard Oil are located along portions of the proposed high speed rail alignment and submitted a map showing the locations. CEMC noted that the potential for subsurface soil along and near the former pipelines to be affected by undocumented residual weathered crude oil. Studies by CEMC at several known release sites confirm that the release is non-hazardous and does not pose significant health risks. CEMC requested to be informed of progress and updates with the HST project, requested GIS data for the finalized HST alignment, and offered to provide GIS data illustrating the location of the former pipelines along the Merced to Fresno Section of the HST project.

Three commenters felt that the information sent out for the scoping meeting was misleading. They interpreted the map to mean that the HST would be along the UPRR corridor and are now concerned that the UPRR and the BNSF are both being evaluated as they are property owners along the BNSF. One such commenter requested additional meetings and extension of the comment period.

As previously noted, several commenters expressed opposition to the Pacheco Pass route due to ecological concerns, specifically regarding the Grasslands Ecological Area. TIE also questioned why the presence of condors in the Pacheco Pass area was not included in the EIR.



### 3.3 Technical/Engineering Concerns

The following section summarizes public comments received pertaining to technical/engineering concerns for the Merced to Fresno Section of the proposed HST project.

#### 3.3.1 Project-wide

One commenter suggested using HST for freight to increase system revenues. One commenter, although supportive of the project, questioned the statewide ridership projections, feeling that they are high. One commenter stated that the rail line should be completed at the same time from Sacramento to Los Angeles.

UPRR noted various technical issues, including a right-of-way width of only 100 feet for most of its corridor in the project area. UPRR also cited the requirement to obtain authority from the federal Surface Transportation Board in order to abandon or discontinue freight services over main or branch lines of a railroad and stated that any attempt to interfere with operations or appropriate by eminent domain will force a de facto abandonment of freight service in violation of federal law. UPRR further stated it has no interest in freight consolidation. UPRR stated that slow freight and HST are incompatible on the same tracks and noted that freight requires a higher overhead clearance of 23 feet 6 inches than the Authority. UPRR also stated that grade-separated crossings must be provided for freight, that freight on any HST trackage should not be contemplated, and freight must comply with all FRA regulations. Finally, UPRR believes that it is not possible or practical to devise mitigation to permit shared use of any of its track.

Transportation is for Everyone (TIE) stated that, for safety reasons, there should be a 600-foot separation between freight trains and HST trains.

#### 3.3.2 Merced to Fresno

Few technical or engineering concerns were raised. Rather, a few commenters noted that the scoping meetings were very informative.

One commenter expressed concern that the HST system would skip small communities that are currently missed by existing services and benefit only those traveling between Los Angeles and San Francisco. This commenter suggested that Amtrak service move to the UPRR tracks and stop at all the small communities to feed the HST system. However, the commenter noted that transportation from the stations to the ultimate destination remains an issue, requiring better transit connections via bus and streetcar. One commenter noted that there is no station planned for Madera and questioned how Madera would access the system. This comment also appeared on the Madera scoping meeting flipchart. One commenter preferred extension of BART or Amtrak expansion, but still expressed support for HST. Another commenter stressed the need to connect rail, bus, and air terminals, preferably by co-locating the facilities to enable people to use the system without difficult transfers or need for an automobile. This commenter also stated that the HST system should provide appropriate linkages, expressing frustration at the service gaps in Amtrak, which requires a bus trip in order to connect between Sacramento and Stockton. A commenter from Pacific Gas and Electric requested coordination with the Authority to identify potential conflicts with gas and electric transmission lines.

Two commenters questioned the system's stop in Merced, expressing confusion about how the system from Los Angeles to San Francisco can have a stop in Merced when it will run south of Chowchilla. TIE questioned the link to Merced due to the need to double back to the south after stopping in Merced.

TIE questioned the choice of Pacheco Pass as the preferred alternative and asked why vehicle miles traveled (VMT) comparisons were not provided in the programmatic EIR, stating that the VMT

comparison between Pacheco Pass and Altamont Pass show that Altamont Pass would provide greater ridership and congestion relief.

Commenters raised questions concerning the power source for HST, including the power requirements, whether the source will be nuclear or hydroelectric, and what suppliers will be used. Numerous commenters expressed support for rail consolidation in Fresno and stated that HST needs to connect to local transit.

### **3.4 Agency Responses to NOP/NOI**

The following section summarizes comments received from 33 agencies regarding the Merced to Fresno Section in response to the NOPs/NOIs and/or provided at one of the scoping meetings. This section is subdivided into federal, state, regional, and local agencies. Agency comments are reproduced in Appendix J and should be referred to for the complete content of the letter.

#### **3.4.1 Federal**

##### **Federal Emergency Management Agency (March 9, 2009)**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) suggested review of the current flood insurance rate maps (FIRMs) for cities and counties in the project area and notes that the cities of Merced, Madera and Fresno and the counties of Merced, Madera, and Fresno are participants in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The minimum NFIP floodplain management building requirements are summarized in the letter.

##### **U.S. Coast Guard (March 6, 2009)**

The U.S. Coast Guard Bridge Office noted that its office should be invited to participate as a cooperating agency for NEPA. The agency stated that the General Bridge Act of 1946 requires the locations and plans for bridges over navigable waters of the United States be approved by the Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard prior to construction. An address was provided for applications for bridge permits. In addition, the Coast Guard's letter indicated that the application must be supported by sufficient information to permit a thorough assessment of the impact of the bridges and approaches on navigation and the environment. The Coast Guard recommended discussing the proposed impacts and procedures for constructing, altering, and demolishing bridges and requests data on the number, size, and types of vessels using or projected to use the waterway in the EIS.

##### **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (April 10, 2009 and October 30, 2009)**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommended FRA and the Authority follow through with mitigation commitments from the Statewide Programmatic EIR/EIS and attached that list. EPA also provided recommendations for continued interagency and community coordination and recommendations, information sources, and guidance for various analyses such as:

- The relationship between this project and other transportation projects.
- Land use and transportation linkages, including analysis of Central Valley routes with and without bypasses to demonstrate full impacts of bypasses and provide flexibility in determining best mix of bypass and mainline routes.
- Analysis of impacts on water resources, biological resources and wildlife (including wildlife movement impacts), noise and vibration (to residents and wildlife), energy resources, air quality (including greenhouse gases), environmental justice communities, and invasive species.



- Cumulative impacts
- Growth inducement
- Tunneling impacts

The EPA recommendations are detailed, and the reader is referred to the original correspondence in Appendix J.

### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (March 18, 2009)**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex Manager reiterated natural resource concerns regarding the HST alignment through or adjacent to the Grasslands Ecological Area. The Service stressed the ecological importance of the area. The letter also stated the need for additional assurance that there will not be a station at Los Banos and questions the Authority's ability to fulfill its commitment to acquire land through easements from willing sellers in areas around the cities of Los Banos and Volta.

### **U.S. Congressman Dennis Cardoza, 18th Congressional District, California (March 18, 2009)**

Congressman Cardoza noted that the state's existing transportation system does not meet the current needs or the demands of the growing population and that HST offers a common-sense solution to the state's transportation, congestion, energy, and air quality challenges while providing a vision for the state's infrastructure and economic future. Congressman Cardoza believes HST offers tremendous benefits to the Central Valley, noting its high growth rate and projected growth. He stated that the Valley is the main artery of the state's transportation system, making it especially important to consider the unique challenges and needs of the Central Valley in the EIR/EIS. Citing the region's poor air quality designation, second only to the Los Angeles air basin, he stated that it is important for the EIR/EIS to provide a thorough air quality analysis and the project's contribution toward meeting AB 32 and SB 375 greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.

Noting the Central Valley's lack of easy access to other population centers, he believes the HST project will transform intercity mobility in the Valley and the state, bringing greater economic, educational, and cultural opportunities to the Valley. He also stated that the EIR/EIS should incorporate job creation and economic development analysis, especially since the area has some of the highest unemployment in the nation. Finally, Congressman Cardoza urged the Authority to select the Castle Airport, Aviation and Development Center in Merced County for the location of the maintenance facility because it meets the Authority's criteria, is in public ownership, has available land, and has connections with other rail and air services.

## **3.4.2 State**

### **California Department of Fish and Game (April 8, 2009)**

The California Department of Fish and Game previously commented on the Statewide and Bay Area to Central Valley Program EIR/EIS documents and incorporated those comments by reference. The department is concerned about significant impacts on wildlife from placement of a grade-separated track throughout the length of the Central Valley as well as impacts on the department's Allensworth Ecological Reserve (ALER) adjacent to the BNSF right-of-way. The department is a trustee and a responsible agency pursuant to CEQA, and the letter outlines the Department's authority. The department noted that, because the department will use the EIR/EIS to issue findings, the document should summarize the technical data, maps, plans, diagrams, and similar information to permit full assessment of all significant impacts.

The department feels that there has been no coordination between the Authority and the department and that the Authority has failed to acknowledge the potential HST impacts on department lands and plants and animals. The Department of Fish and Game further stated that the preferred alternative was selected without active coordination with the department despite requests for coordination and consultation and apparently without consideration of information provided by the department. The department reiterated that it is important for the Authority to consult with the department and regulatory agencies well in advance of any ground disturbance to allow permitting and construction to proceed smoothly.

The Department informed the Authority that an incidental take permit is required for projects that could result in a "take" of species listed as threatened or endangered by the state. The department also has regulatory authority for activities in streams and lakes that could adversely affect fish or wildlife and notes that a Lake and Streambed Alteration (LSA) Agreement will likely be necessary for the project.

The Department stated that the single biggest biological impact potentially arising from construction of the HST is to the regional movements of wildlife and connections between habitats. The department believes that HST has the potential to disrupt already beleaguered wildlife passages, threatening the continued viability of many species due to the creation of barriers to their movement. This movement is necessary for wildlife to access food, shelter, and breeding areas, and isolation can lead to local extinctions and prevent recolonization.

The Department recommended that all segments of the HST not using existing rails be elevated to reduce impacts on animal movement and migration by allowing wildlife to pass freely. The department believes that the wildlife underpasses/overpasses proposed by the Authority are not as effective as elevation of the system. However, if such underpasses/overpasses are used, the department stated extensive research should be conducted to determine the appropriate locations, number, and types of such structures, and noted that specific alternatives, including elevating and tunneling, may not be suitable for all species and locations. The department outlined methods to determine the best locations for wildlife movement structures or avoidance.

Regarding the ALER, the Department questioned whether sufficient right-of-way exists along the BNSF alignment to accommodate an additional track for HST without encroaching on department lands, which have been set aside for the protection of sensitive species and habitats and are extremely valuable as part of an ecologically significant area of native habitat in the Central Valley that includes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services' Pixley National Wildlife Refuge and California State Parks' Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park. In addition, the department noted that some sections of the ALER were acquired as mitigation for impacts from other projects and loss of this land would require significant compensation on the part of the Authority. Finally, the department provided guidance and information sources regarding analysis of impacts on species and habitat and encourages close coordination with the department regarding species surveys.

### **California Department of Parks and Recreation (April 9, 2009)**

- The California Department of Parks and Recreation's Tehachapi District's letter stated that the agency is a Responsible Agency and a Trustee Agency as defined by CEQA. The department is responsible for the stewardship of Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, and is concerned that there may be significant impacts associated with the proposed project. Because these specific concerns apply to this park within the Fresno to Bakersfield Section HST project, they are not summarized here and are addressed in that project section's scoping summary.

### **California Department of Transportation (April 7, 2009 and October 29, 2009)**

Caltrans is requesting permission to participate as a responsible agency pursuant to CEQA and as a cooperating agency pursuant to SAFETEA-LU and looks forward to the development of a coordination plan between the FRA, the Authority, and Caltrans. Caltrans would like to participate in all aspects of the

environmental document and approval process including developing a refined purpose and need, input during alternative selection, and offering expertise on impact avoidance, minimization, and mitigation efforts.

Caltrans is interested in any impacts of the proposed project on the physical, human, and natural environment and would like to evaluate measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate any adverse impacts. Of particular concern is increased traffic to and from proposed train stations which may have a significant impact on the state highway system. The agency noted that future grade separations may also have operational impacts on the state highway system and recommended that these be analyzed in the EIR/EIS. Typical cross sections presented for HST show right-of-way requirements at 60 feet and Caltrans wants to ensure that an increased width is taken into account at grade separations.

At locations where HST parallels a highway, Caltrans requested studies documenting impacts due to turbulence to lighter vehicles traveling on the highway. The agency was also concerned about visual distractions caused by the passing of a high-speed train and flying debris. Specific impacts at all state facility crossings should be included in the study to avoid additional studies in the future.

Caltrans also noted that an individual Project Initiation Document (PID) will be required to gain conceptual approval and a Project Report will be necessary to select a preferred roadway alternative. The letter included references and an internet link to the Caltrans Project Development Procedures Manual and the Highway Design Manual. The agency also noted that encroachment permits must be obtained for placement of encroachments within, under, or over state highway right-of-way and work within the right-of-way must be performed to state standards and specifications.

Finally, Caltrans stated that its staff is available to meet with the project staff and welcomes the opportunity to be invited to Technical Advisory Group team meetings. Caltrans is particularly interested in the development of proposed station locations; sites for right-of-way maintenance, train storage, and heavy maintenance and repair facilities; and alignments as they relate to existing and future Caltrans facilities. The agency offered the Authority and its consultants access to its environmental staff and documents that explain sensitive environmental issues unique to the Central Valley.

### **California Highway Patrol (October 27, 2009)**

The Central Division office of the California Highway Patrol notified the Authority that the HST system will not have an immediate impact on traffic safety, congestion, increased response times, or security within the areas of its jurisdiction.

### **California Native American Heritage Commission (March 2, 2009 and October 8, 2009)**

The Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) recommended actions to assess whether the project will have an adverse effect on historic resources and require mitigation of project-related impacts as required by CEQA, including contacting the appropriate regional archaeological information center for information on previous surveys, known cultural resources, and probability for cultural resources within the project area; submission of an archaeological inventory if required; contacting the NAHC for a sacred lands file check; and inclusion in the mitigation of a plan for the identification and evaluation of accidentally discovered archaeological resources. The NAHC also provided a Native American contact list.

### **California Public Utilities Commission (April 3, 2009 and October 23, 2009)**

The Commission stated that it is the agency responsible for rail safety within California and has exclusive power of the design, alteration, and closure of highway-rail crossings. Commission approval is required for construction or alteration of crossings and application to the Commission is required for construction of railroad across a public road. The Commission provided a reference to design criteria for crossings in

order to comply with the Commission's General Orders and lists the General Orders that are potentially applicable.

The Commission recommended consolidation and grade separation of all existing crossings and HST operation entirely within a dedicated fully grade-separated track, and lists safety reasons for these recommendations. The Commission noted that local entities must be allowed to amend their general plans and incorporate the HST project into existing footprints to allow for future right-of-way preservation. The Commission stated that vandal-resistant fencing or barriers along any at-grade portions of the alignment should be provided. The Commission noted that the information available on the HST is general and more detailed information is necessary. The Commission requested that all proposed grade-separated structure locations be identified. Because the HST project requires electrification to operate the system, discussions regarding the placement of electrical lines must be held with Commission staff so that existing utilities are not impacted and minimum clearances are met. In addition, the Commission stated that meetings should be arranged with the Commission's staff to discuss safety issues and conduct diagnostic reviews of any proposed and impacted crossing locations along the BNSF railway alignment.

Finally, the Commission requested that an administrative draft of the Draft EIR be provided to the Commission so that all parties are able to address any issues before publication of the Draft EIR. A list of railroad crossings along the proposed BNSF alignment is provided.

### **California State Water Resources Control Board (November 24, 2009)**

The State Water Resources Control Board noted that the HST project has the potential to adversely impact water quality and beneficial uses during construction and operation. Since the overall HST project spans more than one Regional Water Board, the State Water Board will issue the certifications for each section in consultation with regional water board staff. Any stormwater discharge or discharge of any pollutant, including dredge and fill material is regulated under State and Regional Water Board permits. In addition, dischargers whose projects disturb one or more acres of soil are required to obtain coverage under the State Water Board's General Permit for Discharges of Stormwater Associated with Construction Activity. State and Regional Water Boards require projects subject to their permitting to avoid and minimize impacts to all waters of the State to the maximum extent practicable, and to ensure no net loss of wetlands. The Board stated that the Draft EIR/EIS must clearly identify selected routes and all project infrastructure and clearly identify all waters of the State, including wetlands that may be affected. The lead agency should ensure that all responsible agencies under CEQA are consulted throughout the preparation of the Draft EIR/EIS. Project design should include scientifically based buffers between wetlands and streams and any impervious surface. When avoidance is infeasible, construction and maintenance measures should be specified that would minimize disturbance to the fullest extent possible. Any remaining and unavoidable impacts to waters of the state should be mitigated for their loss of function and beneficial uses. The Draft EIR/EIS should discuss likely mitigation approaches for each alternative, including types, sites, timing and financial assurances. Potential significant effects to aquatic resources should be evaluated using a watershed approach. Every effort should be made to incorporate low impact development design techniques. Any proposed change to existing flow, channels, rate of discharge should evaluate the effects on current patterns, water circulation, normal water fluctuation, and salinity. Consideration should also be given to the potential diversion or obstruction of flow, alterations of bottom contours, or other significant changes in the hydrologic regime. Any potential surface and ground water effects should be evaluated, including water quality.

The State Water Board stated that the HST project will contribute to on-going loss of natural and agricultural lands, which provide habitat for a variety of listed species. Waterfowl habitat is particularly sensitive to changes in water quality. The project could substantially reduce habitat and restrict the movement of several species. The State Water Board also stated that provisions for inspecting and monitoring the project for environmental compliance should be included in the Draft EIR/EIS and the monitoring effort should be active for the time required to achieve post-construction mitigation success. The State Water Board provided guidance for the qualifications of inspectors and stated that they should

be readily accessible to regulatory agency staff and make regular and timely reports to all agencies. The State Water Board stated that special efforts should be made to avoid impacts to wetlands and waters of the State in areas of ecological integrity, such as State Parks, designated wilderness areas, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, and similar areas. Finally, the State Water Board stated that the Draft EIR/EIS should include a full discussion of cumulative effects in the context of existing and proposed new rail lines and other linear projects in the area and that the project should incorporate design modifications that reestablish or improve on current environmental conditions and ecological processes to lessen cumulative effects.

### **California State Senator Jeff Denham, 12th Senate District (March 18, 2009)**

Senator Denham expressed his support for the project, noting roadway congestion, air pollution, and the need for jobs in the Central Valley as it faces record unemployment. He further advocated for location of the maintenance facility in Merced County at the former Castle Air Force Base, because it is already established for industrial development and will bring jobs to the Central Valley.

## **3.4.3 Regional**

### **Central Valley Flood Protection Board (March 10, 2009)**

The Central Valley Flood Protection Board enforces standards for construction, maintenance, and protection of adopted flood control plans that will protect public lands from floods. The Board outlined activities that require a Board permit.

### **San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (November 3, 2009)**

The District submitted a letter informing the Authority that the project may be subject to District Rule 9510 (Indirect Source Review) requiring the Authority to submit information that enables the District to quantify construction, area and operation emissions, and potentially mitigate a portion of the emissions. The District provided additional information on Rule 9510 and offered to further discuss the requirements.

## **3.4.4 Local Agencies**

### **Chowchilla Water District (November 20, 2009)**

The Chowchilla Water District, with jurisdictional boundaries in both Merced and Madera counties, expressed opposition to a route west of Highway 99, now known as Alternative A3. The District also expressed concern with the lack of outreach to their constituents. While the District supports the concept of high speed rail, they do not think it should involve destroying farms, rural houses, water district facilities, and other facilities essential to the area's economic base. The District notes that there are easements and rights of way existing for rail facilities.

### **City of Atwater (March 18, 2009)**

At the Merced scoping meeting, Atwater's city manager, Greg Wellman, gave verbal comments to the court reporter articulating the City's support of the designation of Castle Air Force Base for the maintenance facility and emphasized the City's commitment to work collaboratively with Merced County, the Authority, and other jurisdictions to bring the maintenance facility to Castle Air Force Base. He noted that the City of Atwater is a regional provider of water and wastewater services to Castle Air Force Base. He emphasized Merced County's economically disadvantaged position, including a 19 percent unemployment rate and limited educational and healthcare access, as reasons for locating the facility in the County to provide opportunity for the economic and social benefits it would bring.



### **City of Chowchilla (April 6, 2009)**

The City of Chowchilla expressed appreciation for the meeting between the Authority's staff and consultants in March and noted their encouragement in learning that the route depicted in the NOP reflected a general corridor rather than identified specific routes. The City was particularly concerned with the proposed alternatives that have the potential to physically isolate Chowchilla due to its unique position at the junction of the west-east route from the Bay Area to the Central Valley and the north-south route through the Central Valley. Specifically, the City expressed concern about potential transportation system connectivity impacts; effects on existing and future land use patterns; economic impacts on residential, commercial, and industrial properties; and public facility impacts within the existing city limits and the City's immediate growth areas.

The City prefers a route that is south of Highway 152 crossing Highway 99 near the new interchange and using the BNSF corridor, avoiding Fairmead and the prisons and providing an opportunity for a maintenance facility in several locations. Another suggested alignment would turn north and south west of Chowchilla, avoiding isolation of Chowchilla and providing opportunities for maintenance facility locations west of Highway 99 or north of Highway 152. The City listed several reasons for preferring these alternatives: fewer impacts on growth in Chowchilla, less impact on planned regional and local circulation systems, consistency with the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint, less potential for endangered species impacts, consistency with the grasslands issues to the west, and no conflict with the Chowchilla Airport. The City also noted that the suggested routes provided more opportunity for less expensive surface alignments. In addition, the City identified specific issues needing further study in the EIR/EIS:

- The alignment for the Gilroy to Merced segment that follows the Henry Miller Road (Avenue 24 through Chowchilla) does not consider the City's General Plan nor its Infrastructure Master Plans and extends through areas that are developed or planned for urban development
- The proposed alignments compromise the community whereas alternative alignments have less impact on existing land uses and still achieve target travel time for the San Francisco to Los Angeles run.
- The proposed alignments create the Chowchilla Triangle, forming a barrier around the City.
- The east-west alignment along Avenue 24 would split the two state correctional facilities east of Highway 99.
- Following the UPRR corridor would decimate the Chowchilla downtown, which the Chowchilla Redevelopment Agency has been working to revitalize.

### **City of Fresno (April 7, 2009 and October 29, 2009)**

The City of Fresno expressed its long-time support of the HST project and the environmental, social, and economic benefits it will provide for the state and the San Joaquin Valley. The City stated that the HST project should be designed to provide an appropriate stop in downtown Fresno, noting it is the center of legal, governmental, medical, and banking facilities that need to reduce congestion, provide efficient land use, and attract talented workers. The City further stated that a downtown Fresno station is an integral part of the City's revitalization efforts and will improve air quality and farmland preservation by supporting intensified mixed-use development served by intermodal transportation facilities.

The City believes that the benefits of HST and efforts to revitalize downtown would be enhanced by partnering with the Authority to identify strategies to relocate the BNSF and UPRR freight corridors to the west of downtown closer to the current location of heavy industries. This would enable the former freight lines through downtown to be used for HST rather than acquiring a new corridor. Therefore, the City requested analysis of constructing a bypass loop corridor west of downtown for relocation of the freight services be incorporated in the EIR/EIS. The City believes this option would enhance HST operations and

mitigate environmental impacts such as safety, noise, vibration, air quality, property value decrease, and economic loss.

The City's October 2009 letter lists three reasons that regional intermodal transportation facilities are needed at both ends of the Fresno to Merced alignment: expected population growth in Central California for the next 20 to 40 years, economic development, and air quality and highway congestion. The City further notes that land use issues are mitigated by the use of the existing UPRR right of way north of Fresno and through Fresno.

### **City of Madera Community Development Department (April 9, 2009)**

The City of Madera stated that a potential alignment west of Highway 99 should be evaluated with the other alternatives. The City believes that HST along the UPRR corridor will form a physical and cultural barrier that would bisect Madera, disrupting the function of downtown and resulting in economic impacts and blight. The City also believes that HST along the BNSF corridor would divide long-established rural neighborhoods, some of which are environmental justice communities. In addition, the City asserted that HST along the BNSF would create a barrier to the easterly growth pattern established for the city due to the location of prime agricultural land to the west, resulting in loss of agricultural lands by pushing growth west. However, the City believes that an alignment west of Highway 99 would create an edge for urban development, protecting agricultural lands.

The City also expressed concerns regarding the east-west alignment north of Highway 152, which is not consistent with the Chowchilla Infrastructure and General Plans that show this area as future urban development. Instead the City requested evaluation of an alignment south of Highway 152, which would avoid conflicts to the region such as creating the "Chowchilla Triangle" and splitting the state correctional facilities. The City also stated that an alignment along the UPRR corridor will decimate downtown Chowchilla, wasting redevelopment funds.

The City noted that the EIR/EIS should evaluate potential impacts on circulation systems and public services and include mitigation measures for these impacts. The City further stated that specific features necessary to accommodate the needs of affected agencies along the HST route should be identified in direct consultation with those agencies and encourages the project team to work with the City to that end. The City requested that the Authority describe how the existing outlying communities will access the proposed rail stations. The City stated that design characteristics to reduce or eliminate impacts should be prioritized over "off-site" measures and requests that measures required of future development to mitigate impacts such as noise attenuation should be called out in detail, including cost.

Finally the City supports the Authority's completion of a Coordination Plan and provides a map of alternative alignments and maintenance facility locations.

### **Council of Fresno County Governments (April 9, 2009)**

The Council of Fresno County Governments (COG) comment letter reiterated and attached comments submitted on the Draft Statewide Programmatic EIR/EIS to the Authority on August 27, 2004. These comments noted the following issues:

- The need to analyze potential impacts on farmland and the preference to utilize existing railroad right-of-way to minimize disruption to farmland.
- The need for at least five of the daily express trains in each direction to stop in Fresno in addition to the non-express trains.
- The possibility of accommodating truck trailers and containers for freight on the HST system to further reduce congestion and improve air quality as well as increase financial viability.

- A concern about the viability of downtown businesses in smaller communities with the construction of lengthy overpasses and/or underpasses.
- The location of the station in downtown Fresno, allowing for maximum multimodal interface.
- Alignments along the UPRR corridor should avoid traveling through the small cities of Fowler, Selma, and Kingsburg, and additional costs associated with this should be included in HST financing.
- Funds identified in the Draft EIR/EIS to construct a bypass loop around Fresno should be used to relocate Amtrak and BNSF services within the UPRR corridor. If not technically feasible, these funds should be used to mitigate the impact on rail consolidation/relocation and other regional rail issues created by placement of HST within the UPRR corridor.
- The Authority should consider locating the proposed maintenance facility in the city of Fresno or the Fresno area.
- The Central Valley Section of the HST system should be implemented first, because its construction is not as complex or costly.

In addition, the COG emphasized the following two points from their original comment letter: location of the maintenance facility/operations center in Fresno County and the importance of alternatives in the EIR/EIS that are appropriate for rail consolidation, including a bypass loop/corridor west of the metropolitan area that could be used to relocate one or more of the rail freight services and high-speed express tracks.

### **Fresno County, Department of Public Works and Planning (March 25, 2009, and April 21, 2009)**

The County supported the BNSF alignment south of Fresno. The south corridor cities (Fowler, Selma, and Kingsburg) agreed with this position. The County supported a downtown Fresno station along the UPRR corridor and recommended maximum multi-modal interface. The County supported the location of the maintenance facility yard in the Fresno area. The County was open to the Authority's consideration of an additional station in Tulare County if this option would not require a return to the UPRR corridor or a Greenfield alignment in Fresno County. The County also supported a minor diversion from the BNSF corridor to avoid the community of Laton. The County noted that the EIR/EIS should address compliance with the Noise element of the General Plan.

### **Fresno County Flood Control District (March 2, 2009)**

In response to a request by the Fresno to Bakersfield consultant team, the Fresno Flood Control District provided a CD that lists existing and proposed master plan storm drainage facilities within the existing railroad rights-of-way. The District also provided the following information regarding drainage facility impacts:

- The Authority will be required to contribute its pro-rata share of the cost and/or construction of the drainage system to mitigate the impacts of the project on storm drainage should it receive service from the District.
- Relocation, construction, or reconstruction of drainage facilities will need approval from the District prior to implementation.
- Revisions in rail lines that alter historical drainage patterns will require a "major storm" study.
- The District will review and approve final improvement plans for the project within its boundaries to ensure consistency with the approved Storm Drainage Master Plan.



### **Madera-Chowchilla Water and Power Authority (12/2/09)**

The Joint Powers Authority, consisting of the Madera Irrigation District and the Chowchilla Water district requested time to consider the new route (A3), which they feel will negatively impact their existing operations and constituents.

### **Madera County Board of Supervisors (March 23, 2009 and October 26, 2009)**

The Madera County Board of Supervisors noted that Madera County is a self-help community that has positioned itself to help all new industrial development in part to overcome ongoing high unemployment. The Board provided a list of reasons supporting the location of the maintenance facility in the County: central location, several site possibilities, able and willing workforce with an easy commute from adjoining counties, home to Madera Community College and close to other educational institutions, strong local support, low land costs, and flexibility in infrastructure provision.

In its October 2009 letter, the Madera County Board of Supervisors and letter cosigners City of Madera and City of Chowchilla stated that they support the BNSF route with a UPRR to BNSF link just north of the City of Chowchilla as a preferred route (also known as A-1). The three jurisdictions further agree that the remainder of the A-1 route north of Chowchilla should be dropped through Le Grand and Planada. If that route is removed from consideration, they support a route west of Highway 99 (known as A-3) and find the "GEA" route unsupportable. They are opposed to the UPRR route due to significant impacts on the downtown areas of the cities of Madera and Chowchilla and impacts to the community of Fairmead. Finally, they support the Henry Miller to South of SR 152 as the east-west alternative.

### **Madera County Farm Bureau (December 10, 2009)**

The Madera County Farm Bureau expressed numerous concerns regarding the impact of an alignment west of Highway 99, now known as A3, on agriculture. The Bureau noted that the revenue generated by local farming industries is the primary source of tax revenue and the main economic driver for Madera County. The Bureau stated that a route west of Highway 99 through the county's fertile Westside farmland would force Madera County agriculture to pay the price for nearby cities that benefit from HST stops in their communities. They Bureau also referred to the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley and the City of Madera's Vision 2025 project which advocate for the preservation of farmland. They listed several reasons for their strong opposition to Alternative A3: the process of identifying the alternative did not include the Madera County Farm Bureau; it ignores property lines and cuts diagonally through parcels, potentially make them too small to be profitable; it is not compatible with the stringent state laws regarding application of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides; irrigation canals and irrigation systems will be interrupted and costly to reconfigure; wind impacts on flowering trees and bee pollination will decrease yields; and farmland is not replaceable and there is no true mitigation for farmland loss. Finally, the Bureau stated that high-speed rail must value the priorities of rural peoples equal with urbanites, especially in the Central Valley where agriculture production leads in its contribution to the tax base.

### **Madera County Resource Management Agency (April 8, 2009)**

Madera County Resource Management Agency (RMA) letter thanked project team for the numerous meetings and workshops provided in the Central Valley and Madera County. The RMA listed several issues with the proposed routes along the UPRR and BNSF corridors that need to be addressed in the EIR/EIS:

- Degradation of small farming communities of Fairmead and Berenda (due to the UPRR corridor alternative) and Trigo (due to the BNSF corridor alternative) by limiting their growth and prosperity, resulting in an environmental justice issue.
- Lack of a plan for how outlying communities would access the proposed HST system.

- Costs to impacted communities from restricted development on the opposite side of the tracks due to the high costs of infrastructure associated with crossing HST tracks.
- Impacts on small community airports and the Fresno Air Terminal.
- Adverse impacts on economic development throughout the Central Valley.
- Potential for the Central Valley to become a service economy with jobs limited to the large urban centers.
- Division and isolation of minority communities on one side of the HST tracks in downtown Chowchilla and Madera with the UPRR corridor.
- Loss of agricultural lands by restricting growth to the east, forcing growth to the west, with the BNSF corridor.
- Loss of transportation funding for addressing continuing automobile demand on the freeway system.
- Concern over whether there will be sufficient ridership to justify the cost of the project.
- Densities below those required to provide the necessary ridership to support HST, and lack of sufficient water resources and infrastructure to accommodate the necessary densities.

Due to these concerns, Madera County RMA suggested a north-south alignment along the west side of the city of Madera, the Fairmead community, and the city of Chowchilla. The RMA believes this alternative would avoid the issues they are concerned about, facilitate the construction of a Caltrans Highway 99 truck bypass route, and create an urban boundary preserving prime agricultural lands and an agriculture buffer along the west side. The RMA also noted the cheaper land along this route would result in reduced costs. The RMA also believes that an east-west alignment south of Highway 152 offers similar advantages, including avoidance of wetlands located west of Chowchilla.

### **Madera County Transportation Commission (April 9, 2009)**

The Madera County Transportation Commission (MCTC) noted that it is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Regional Transportation Planning Agency for the Madera County region. The MCTC noted that Madera County has a unique position in the proposed HST route as a hub connecting the Bay Area and Southern California as well as north to the Sacramento metropolitan area and, as a result, believes that the potential impacts require closed scrutiny in the EIR/EIS process.

The MCTC has been working with other San Joaquin Valley MPOs in the development of a Regional Blueprint for the Valley to inform local land use planning over the next 40 years and urges the Authority to consider the regional land use and transportation planning efforts conducted locally in support of the Regional Blueprint when developing the EIR/EIS. Finally, the MCTC stated that integration of the Metro-Rural Loop concept currently being explored by the Mid-Valley Multi-Modal partnership is a priority.

### **Mariposa County Supervisor Aborn (March 18, 2009)**

Brad Aborn, Mariposa County Supervisor, submitted written comments at the Merced scoping meeting. These comments included an attachment of the County Board of Supervisors' July 13, 2007, letter to the Authority regarding the need for an EIR public hearing for the Bay Area to Central Valley Programmatic EIR/EIS and the Central Valley and Mariposa County Resolution No. 07-566, stating the County's objection to the Pacheco Pass alternative for the Bay Area to Central Valley Section.

### **Merced County Board of Supervisors (April 9, 2009)**

The County expressed its support for the HST project and offers assistance in organizing regional agencies on critical topics of shared interest related to the HST project such as a maintenance facility at

the former Castle Air Force Base. The County also stated that it is a Responsible Agency pursuant to CEQA. The County is in the process of updating its General Plan, and, therefore, noted that close coordination will be necessary to ensure that the project is evaluated against current General Plan policy. The County discussed several areas that it would like the Authority to address in the EIR/EIS:

- **Land Use** – A comprehensive analysis of consistency with the County General Plan is necessary, with consistency in rural designated areas determined largely by impacts on agricultural and open space resources and consistency in urban designated areas based largely on the goals, objectives, and policies of the particular community plan. It appears that the project may have land use conflicts with existing uses in the unincorporated communities of Santa Nella and Volta and to designated Highway Interchange Centers along the I-5 corridor. The EIR/EIS should analyze these impacts.
- **Circulation** – The EIR/EIS should evaluate impacts on traffic flow at local intersections and the project should minimize impacts through routing, design, and fully grade-separated crossings as well as mitigate impacts.
- **Air Quality** – The EIR/EIS should fully evaluate the project's potential to increase local air pollution and the potential conflicts with the County's General Plan policies designed to reduce air pollution.
- **Noise** – The project has the potential to add significant noise impacts, especially at any at-grade crossings in established communities. The County General Plan contains noise exposure standards for rural and urban land use designations, and noise generated by this project should be evaluated in the context of these standards.
- **Open Space and Conservation** – The County General Plan contains goals, objectives, and policies that recognize the importance of the County's open space, habitat, wetland, and aesthetic resources. The proposed project has the potential to affect these resources and the EIR/EIS needs to study the effects and minimize any adverse impacts on these resources.
- **Water Supply** – The County is largely dependent on groundwater and groundwater recharge for its water supply. To the extent that the project would increase impervious surfaces in the County, the EIR/EIS should evaluate the impacts on groundwater supply. The EIR/EIS should also examine the potential for the project to cause further degradation of groundwater quality in the County.
- **UC - Merced University Community Plan (UCP)** – The EIR/EIS should examine the relationship of the proposed project to the UCP and ensure that the project is integrated with and supports the circulation element of the UCP.
- **Regional Transportation Program (RTP)** – The EIR/EIS needs to fully evaluate the project's relationship and conformity with the RTP and regional transportation projects such as the Campus Parkway, the Merced-Atwater Expressway, and the Los Banos By-Pass.
- **Urban Decay/Environmental Justice** – The County requests that the EIR/EIS provide an urban decay analysis as required by CEQA and an environmental justice analysis required by NEPA, including analysis of the potential for locating the maintenance facility at Castle Commerce Center and Airport (Castle) to prevent the County from reducing blight or to cause environmental justice issues. The County also requests examination of environmental justice issues involved in siting the track.

While recognizing that the general alignment has been selected through the previous programmatic EIR/EIS, the County emphasized the importance of evaluating alternative alignments that minimize conflicts with the County General Plan and RTP, and is especially concerned that the EIR/EIS evaluate alternative locations for the proposed maintenance facilities. The County requested additional information regarding the criteria that will be used to select the location of the Merced Station. The County noted that the Authority is considering the former Castle Air Force Base as the location for the maintenance facility and that this facility is an integral part of the County's redevelopment and economic development programs. Therefore, the County requested that the EIR/EIS examine the impact of the project on these programs, specifically the following issues:

- Conformity with goals, objectives, and policies of the Castle Re-Use Plan.
- Relationship to onsite rail facilities.
- Relationship with the Castle Airport layout plan and Airport Master Plan being prepared by the County.
- Impacts on existing land uses and development within Castle.
- Potential economic impacts on Castle and County redevelopment activities.
- Relationship to existing environmental clean-up activities at Castle.

In addition, the County recommended that the study corridor for the project be expanded from 100 feet to 500 feet to evaluate the relationship and consistency of the project with a wide array of County General Plan policies and adequately analyze potentially significant impacts such as noise, air quality, and other impacts.

### **Merced County Board of Supervisors, Jerry O'Banion, District 5 (April 9, 2009)**

Supervisor O'Banion noted the support of the citizens of Merced County for HST. Supervisor O'Banion supported expedited construction of the project as a means to relieve future traffic congestion, improve air quality, and provide local jobs. In addition, he supported the use of the former Castle Air Force Base as the maintenance hub for the system, noting its central location and the availability of population and workforce training. He also stated, recognizing that Proposition 1A prohibits a station between Gilroy and Merced, that the EIR/EIS provides an opportunity to consider a station or other means to connect Westside communities.

### **Merced County Farm Bureau (March 18, 2009)**

The Executive Director of the Merced County Farm Bureau, Ms. Westmoreland-Pedrozo, provided verbal comments on behalf of the Farm Bureau to the court reporter at the Merced scoping meeting. She expressed the Board of Directors' concern that state project decisions are being left to local land use decision-makers. She noted that the project would predominantly affect privately owned agricultural land and that the project should include land use policies and just compensation for any loss of agricultural land and the ability to farm that land in its totality. She emphasized that splitting segments of land has a long-term impact on the owner-operator of that land. She also noted that the Farm Bureau did not support the Pacheco Pass route and believes that the Altamont corridor needs to be evaluated as the prime route as it does not bisect the county. She noted the history of the farming community working with agencies that govern wetlands and expressed concern over the historical lack of valuing the ability to feed ourselves in the state and the Valley.

### 3.5 Summary Comment Tables

**Table 3-1**  
Summary of Written Scoping Comments

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
<b>FEDERAL AGENCIES</b>		
Congressman Dennis Cardoza, US House of Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High Speed Rail offers a common-sense solution to our state's transportation, congestion, energy, and air quality challenges and also provides a vision for our state's infrastructure and economic future.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2, Purpose and Need and Project Objectives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Valley is the main artery of the state's transportation system, so it is especially important for the High Speed Rail Authority to consider the unique challenges and needs of the Central Valley when evaluating the Merced to Bakersfield Project Level EIR/EIS.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A High Speed Rail system, with links up and down the Valley will help to alleviate our air quality and congestion problems. It is important for the Project Level EIR/EIS to incorporate a thorough air quality analysis. The Authority should incorporate greenhouse gas emission reductions into its review, analyzing the project's potential contribution toward meeting AB32 and SB375 greenhouse gas emission reduction regional transportation targets for the Valley.</li> </ul>	3.2 Air Quality
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connecting Valley communities together and connecting the Valley to the other major urban areas of the state will provide a long term foundation for transformational shift in intercity mobility for the Valley and for the State. It will also bring greater economic, educational and cultural opportunities to the Valley.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Purpose and Need; 3.1 Transportation, 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is crucial that the Authority incorporate job creation and economic development into its project level analysis.</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Gregor Blackburn, CFM, Branch Chief, Floodplain Management and Insurance Branch, FEMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please review the current effective Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for the Cities of Merced, Madera, Visalia, Fresno, Bakersfield, and their respective counties. That the Cities of Merced, Merced County, Madera, Madera County, Visalia, Tulare County, Bakersfield, Kern County, and Fresno, Fresno County, California are participants in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The minimum, basic NFIP floodplain management building requirements are described in Vol. 44 Code of Federal Regulations (44 CFR), Sections 59 through 65.</li> <li>Many NFIP participating communities have adopted floodplain management building requirements which are more restrictive than the minimum federal standards described in 44 CFR. Please contact the local community's floodplain manager for more information on local floodplain management building requirements.</li> </ul>	3.7 Hydrology and Water Resources
David H. Sulouff, Chief, Bridge Section, Eleventh Coast Guard District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The General Bridge Act of 1946 requires that the location and plans for bridges over navigable waters of the United States be approved by the Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard prior to commencing construction. Coast Guard Bridge permitting is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Coast Guard should be invited to participate as a cooperating agency for NEPA.</li> </ul>	3.7 Hydrology and Water Resources
Tom Plenys, Environmental Review Office, US Environmental Protection Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If properly planned, EPA supports the concept of a high speed train (HST) system in California that can provide an alternative to increasing vehicle miles traveled and lead to reduced environment impacts.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We recommend that FRA and CHSRA follow through with the mitigation measure commitments made in the statewide Tier 1 Final Programmatic EIS.</li> </ul>	Chapter 3 Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Mitigation Measures
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPA commends the previous efforts of FRA and CHSRA in coordinating with our agency to highlight the potential environmental impacts of and HST system for all of California as outlined in our April 2003 Interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). EPA is available for continued coordination with FRA/CHSRA and other resource agencies to discuss potential environmental concerns and solutions at the earliest possible opportunity. Methods to incorporate effective public participation into the NEPA process should be fully described and implemented early to better address public concerns during the planning process. Where potential acquisition of property is proposed, and open, participatory process involving affected residents should be implemented.</li> </ul>	7.2 Agency Consultation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Draft EIS should identify all transportation improvements proposed to provide access to the proposed Project from anticipated key rider groups along the Merced to Bakersfield</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.2 Air Quality; 3.3



Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	<p>corridor and surrounding population centers, including transit connections, new methods to move people while reducing congestion, and increased bus service. Analyze and disclose the temporary and permanent environmental impacts of constructing stations, parking facilities, maintenance and storage facilities, power propagation infrastructure, and required road developments and modifications. Draft EIS should describe the specific modifications to the existing rail network and rail crossings required to be compatible with an HST system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Draft EIS should also demonstrate avoidance and minimization measures to reduce environmental impacts associated with the construction of passenger stations and maintenance facilities, such as multi-level parking structures as opposed to large expansive parking lots; disclose the associated impacts from station development on planned and unplanned growth. Describe the expected land use changes associated with station locations, including new transit services and other methods for riders to access the stations. Describe the associated environmental impacts of those land use changes, including indirect and cumulative impacts. Identify parties responsible for mitigating the environmental impacts associated with the indirect and cumulative impacts. Identify the timeline for improvements and maintenance. As applicable, the Draft EIS should include a comparison of potential impacts from 1) an alternative that would provide for concurrent construction of one project allowing for high speed train technology in addition to commuter train technology, and 2) construction of a proposed commuter rail project followed by a second, separate project of construction of a future high speed train corridor.</li> <li>▪ Minimize the number of parking spaces to the greatest extent possible at the station in order to facilitate the use of transit; coordinate with other transit providers to maximize station access by transit, design the new facilities to be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, in addition to linking with other modes of transit, and support policies that will increase density and mixed-uses in the station areas.</li> <li>▪ For the alternatives in the Central Valley that may include an express loop in addition to a route through a community, provide a comparison chart of environmental impacts associated with each bypass proposed. Separate the reporting of environmental impacts associated with mainline routes only and mainline routes plus bypass express loops. Clarify why loop construction, in addition to mainline routes, is warranted in each community in light of additional farmland, noise, and visual impacts. Examine additional, less-damaging measures, other than loop configurations that result in farmland and habitat fragmentation, to reduce urban impacts and logistical challenges. Specify why, in the Central Valley, alignments incorporate loops and bypasses while in other geographic areas there are no proposed loops and bypasses.</li> </ul>	<p>Noise and Vibration; 3.4 EMI/EMF; 3.5 Public Utilities and Energy; 3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands; 3.7 Hydrology and Water Resources; 3.8 Geology, Soils, Seismicity; 3.9 Hazardous Waste, Materials; 3.10 Safety and Security; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use; 3.13 Parks, Recreation and Open Space; 3.14 Aesthetics and Visual Quality; 3.15 Cultural Resources; 3.16 Cumulative Impacts</p>

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Draft EIS for the Merced to Bakersfield HST segment; follow through with commitments made in the Final Programmatic EIS (Final PEIS): “Avoidance and minimization measures would be incorporated into the development, design, and implementation phases at project-level environmental analysis.” Ensure the mitigation measures as listed in the table starting on page 3.17-28 of the Final EIS are incorporated in the Draft EIS. Demonstrate that all potential impacts to waters of the United States have been avoided and minimized. Or demonstrate how cost, logistical, or technological constraints preclude avoidance and minimization of impacts. Identify design measures and modifications to avoid and minimize impacts to water resources. Quantify the benefits achieved for each alternative studied. Identify all protected resources with special designations and all special aquatic sites and waters within state, local, and federal protected lands. Additional steps should be taken to avoid and minimize impacts to these areas. Include a compensation proposal for unavoidable impacts to CWA regulated waters that complies with new regulations for compensatory promulgated in April 2007 (40 CFR 230 Subpart J).</li> <li>▪ Estimate waters of the United States within the project area using CWA jurisdictional determinations, which should be submitted to the Army Corps of Engineers for verification. Provide maps of the estimated or verified CWA jurisdictional determinations. Provide specific descriptions of proposed activities in CWA regulated waters including grading plans and cross sections. Include the classification of waters and the geographic extent of waters and adjacent riparian areas. Characterize the functional condition of waters and adjacent riparian areas. Describe the extent and nature of stream channel alteration, riverine corridor continuity, and buffered tributaries. Include wildlife species affected that could reasonably be expected to use waters or associated riparian habitat and sensitive plant taxa that are associated with waters or associated riparian habitat. Analyze the potential flood flow alteration. Characterize the hydrologic linkage to any impaired water body. Analyze the potential water quality impact and potential effects to designated uses. Address techniques proposed for minimizing surface water contamination due to increased runoff from additional impervious surfaces. To demonstrate compliance with CWA Guidelines, FRA/CHSRA must explore on-site alternatives to avoid or minimize impacts to specific waters. The Draft EIS should include a complete systematic analysis for drainage crossings which identifies and prioritizes the potential for improvements to the aquatic system and for wildlife use at each crossing, as applicable. Temporary and permanent impacts to waters of the U.S. for each alternative studied should be quantified; for example, acres of waters impacted, etc. For each alternative, the Draft EIS should report these numbers in table form for each impacted water and wetland feature.</li> </ul>	<p>3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands; 3.7 Hydrology and Water Resources</p>

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Draft EIS should address wildlife movement impacts associated with the proposal and present mitigating measures, if appropriate. Proposed stream and wash crossings should be designed to maintain or improve existing wildlife passages. Incorporate information developed for the California Missing Linkages Report and identify how Project alternatives have been designed to allow for continued wildlife movement. Use data developed for the statewide California Wildlife Action Plan (CWAP) to inform the siting of Project alternatives and mitigation. Identify in the Draft EIS the specific design changes proposed to avoid resources. Facilitate a meeting of scientists and local experts to explore specific locations and design features for wildlife crossings that are needed. Identify the connections that would likely remain after construction of the HST system and highlight these areas as “connectivity zones” for protection and preservation. Identify specific commitments for preservation of these corridors through mitigation measures and cooperative agreements. Disclose how fencing the train route will affect wildlife movement and discuss how fencing for safety purposes will be integrated with proposed wildlife passages, such as culverts, bridges, viaducts, underpasses, and overpasses. Describe efforts to avoid and/or minimize impacts to threatened and endangered species and associated habitats, as well as preserves, parks, and restoration and habitat management areas. Efforts to minimize or avoid impacts to resources should be presented with a quantification of specific resources avoided.</li> </ul>	3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All noise impacts to should be fully analyzed and presented in the Draft EIS, and the Draft EIS should include commitments to implement measures to adequately mitigate noise impacts associated with the Project. The Draft EIS should address nocturnal and diurnal impacts to wildlife activities that may be affected by new noise and vibration introduced to natural habitats.</li> </ul>	3.3 Noise and Vibration; 3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the number and capacity of energy facilities that were either operational or under construction as of 2008 and discuss whether the future supply is expected to be adequate to meet growth in demand, given the number of power plants planned. Discuss the cumulative impact of other reasonable foreseeable projects that will also increase demand on the existing energy supply.</li> </ul>	3.5 Public Utilities and Energy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a detailed discussion of ambient air conditions, nonattainment areas, and potential air quality impacts of the project for construction and operation (including cumulative and indirect impacts) for each alternative. Disclose the available information about the health risks associated with vehicle emissions, sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the project area, and how the proposed project will affect current emission levels. Work with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD), Caltrans, and regional planning agencies to ensure that methods to estimate emissions and anticipated emissions values from the proposed project are consistent with Air Quality Management Plan and Regional</li> </ul>	3.2 Air Quality

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	<p>Transportation Plan (RTP) conformity determinations. Use the most current EPA-approved model to estimate emissions. Include an identification of potential hotspot impacts, especially where parking lots, idling locomotives, idling buses, and road modifications are proposed. If required, the Draft EIS should include the general conformity determination with related mitigation commitments. The Draft EIS should demonstrate that FHWA or FTA –funded or – approved project elements are included in a conforming transportation plan and a transportation improvement program. The Draft EIS should included SJVAPCD requirements to reduce emissions. In addition to there measures, EPA recommends additional measure to reduce the impacts resulting from future construction associated with this Project. (listed in letter)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In light of the serous health impacts associated with PM<sub>2.5</sub> (fine particulate matter) and diesel exhaust exposure, we recommend that the best available control measures for these pollutants be implemented at all times and recommend that a Construction Emissions Mitigation Plan is incorporated into the Draft EIS.</li> <li>▪ Install wind fencing and phase grading operations where appropriate, and operate water trucks for stabilization of surfaces under windy conditions. When hauling material and operating non-earthmoving equipment, prevent spillage and limit speeds to 15 miles per hour (mph). Limit speed of earth-moving equipment to 10 mph.</li> <li>▪ Minimize use, trips, and unnecessary idling of heavy equipment.</li> <li>▪ Please refer to our detailed comments on the HST Project Environmental Analyses Methodologies for recommendations on the analysis of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the project level EISs. EPA recommends the Draft EIS should ultimately identify the cumulative contribution and reductions to GHG emissions that will result from implementation of the Project. We also recommend that the Draft EIS discuss the potential impacts of climate change on the Project and identify if there are specific mitigation measures needed. Any design and operation measures that can be identified as reducing GHGs should be identified with an estimate of the GHG emissions reductions.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify tunneling methodology and impacts.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The cumulative impacts analysis should provide the context for understanding the magnitude of the impacts of the alternatives by analyzing the impacts of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects or actions and then considering those cumulative impacts in their entirety. These actions include both transportation and non-transportation activities. Where adverse cumulative impacts are identified, the Drat EIS should disclose the parties that would be responsible for avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating those adverse impacts. EPA recommends that FRA and CHSRA use the Caltrans cumulative impacts guidance, which is applicable to cumulative impact analyses for non-road projects.</li> </ul>	3.16 Cumulative Impacts

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPA recommends that FRA and CHSRA make both the methodology and the assumptions in the growth inducing analysis as transparent as possible to the public and decision makers. Ground truth the results of the land use model. Use the results of the growth inducement analysis to inform station locations, and parking lot size and locations, as well as mitigation measures to reduce environmental impacts. Use the results of the growth inducement analysis to estimate growth inducement impact to CWA regulated waters and inform LEDPA identification. Address potential growth-related mitigation efforts. Use FHWA and Caltrans growth-related impacts guidance.</li> <li>The Council on Environmental Quality has developed guidance concerning how to address Environmental Justice in the environmental review process. Identify how the proposed alternative may affect the mobility of low-income or minority populations in the surrounding area. Provide specific, appropriate mitigation measure for any anticipated adverse impacts to community members. Include opportunities for incorporating public input to promote context sensitive design, especially in Environmental Justice communities.</li> <li>To the extent that this project will entail new landscaping and tree replacement, the mitigation measures should describe how the project will meet the requirements of Executive Order 13112 by using native species. Replacement of trees and re-vegetation should be coordinated with appropriate city and county urban foresters and native species should be utilized where feasible.</li> </ul>	<p>3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use; 3.16 Cumulative Impacts</p> <p>3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice</p> <p>3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands; 3.14 Aesthetics and Visual Quality</p>
<b>STATE AGENCIES</b>		
Jeffrey R. Single, Ph.D., Regional Manager, Department of Fish and Game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Department is concerned about the significant impacts the placement of a grade-separated, access controlled track throughout the length of the Central Valley will have on wildlife movement in the region.</li> <li>The Authority proposes to use a variety of wildlife under- and overpasses to facilitate animal movement along the rail line, it is unclear where and at what intervals these will be placed. As a superior alternative to using wildlife movement corridors only at certain locations along the rail, the Department recommends that all segments of the railway that are not using existing rails be elevated.</li> <li>If wildlife movement passage structures will be used instead of elevated tracks, extensive research should be conducted to determine the appropriate locations, numbers and types of such structures. Specific alignments and wildlife passage structures may not be suitable for all species and locations and would need to be evaluated carefully. Methods to determine the best locations for wildlife movement structures or avoidance should include at a minimum: 1) track count surveys, 2) ditch crossing surveys, 3) monitoring trails with infrared or Trailmaster cameras, and 4) GIS habitat modeling to identify likely wildlife travel corridors and anthropogenic barriers. Wildlife habitat linkages will need to be identified using habitat</li> </ul>	3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	<p>models, information from the movement studies, GIS analyses, and Department expertise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Department recommends that the HST rail line that runs adjacent to Department lands, Federal land, State Parks lands or any other lands of conservation importance along the route be fully elevated in order to provide for adequate movement of species that inhabit these lands on either side of the tracks.</li> <li>▪ The EIR/EIS should contain an accurate and complete description of the existing biological conditions in and around the HST project site, including all specially-designated species and habitats that may occur within at least 5 miles of HST alignment. Through consultation with the Department, the California Natural Diversity Data Base (CNDDB), state and federal resource agency lists, California Wildlife Habitat Relationship System (CWHR) California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Inventory, agency contacts, environmental documents for other projects in the vicinity, academic, professional and scientific organizations, and other sources. The Authority should briefly address each species and habitat on the generated list to determine which species and habitats will need to be addressed in more detail in the EIR/EIS. If a species is not addressed in more detail in the EIR/EIS, a brief explanation why should be provided.</li> <li>▪ Survey protocols for listed species and/or sensitive habitats should be approved by the Department, USFWS, and other relevant regulatory agencies prior to implementation. Animal surveys should follow protocols adopted by the Department, USFWS and United States Geological Survey (USGS), where they exist. Plant survey should follow the adopted Guidelines developed and maintained by the Department. Comprehensive survey work should be carried out in time to inform the analysis of the EIR/EIS, and not deferred to the pre-construction phase</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordination between the Authority and the Department has to this point not occurred as the Authority has failed to fully acknowledge potential HST impacts to Department lands and the plants and animals that we manage. The selection of preferred alternatives for HST routes was made without active coordination with the Department.</li> </ul>	7.2 Agency Consultation
Carol McDonald, High Speed Rail Coordinator, Office of Transportation Planning, District 6, Department of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One area of concern is the increased traffic traveling to and from the proposed train stations, which may have significant impacts to the State highway system. Future grade separations may also have operational impacts to the State highway system and it is recommended that these potential traffic impacts be analyzed and included in the study.</li> <li>▪ At locations where the high-speed train line parallels the highway, please provide studies documenting the impacts due to turbulence to lighter vehicles, i.e. motorcycles, traveling on the highway.</li> <li>▪ We also have concerns with the possible visual distractions and flying debris and trash onto the State highways.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation



Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
J.R. Abrames, Chief, Central Division California Highway Patrol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The HST system will not have an immediate impact on traffic safety, congestion, increased response times, or security within the areas of its jurisdiction.</li> </ul>	3.10 Safety and Security
Katy Sanchez, Program Analyst, Native American Heritage Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To adequately assess and mitigate project-related impacts to archaeological resources, the NAHC recommends the following actions: 1) Contact the appropriate Regional Archaeological Information Center for a record search. 2) If an archaeological inventory survey is required, the final stage is the preparation of a professional report detailing the findings and recommendations of the records search and field survey. 3) Contact the Native American Heritage Commission for: A Sacred Lands File Check and a list of appropriate Native American contacts for consultation. 4) Lack of surface evidence of archaeological resources does not preclude their subsurface existence. Lead agencies should include in their mitigation plan provisions for the identification and evaluation of accidentally discovered archaeological resources, for the disposition of recovered artifacts, and for discovery of Native American human remains.</li> </ul>	3.15 Cultural Resources
Brian Leung, Rail Crossings Engineering Section, Consumer Protection and Safety Division, California Public Utilities Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>California Public Utilities Commission has exclusive power over the design, alteration, and closure of highway-rail crossings and Commission approval is required for the construction or alteration of crossings.</li> <li>Design criteria for HST will need to comply with the Commission General Orders.</li> <li>Elevating or lowering the tracks, particularly in the downtown areas, would mitigate trespassing concern. Vandal resistant fencing or barriers along any remaining at-grade portions of the alignment should be a requirement of the project.</li> <li>Discussions in regards to the placement of electrical lines must be held with Commission staff so that existing utilities aren't impacted and minimum required clearances are met.</li> <li>We request to be kept informed of all developments associated with the HST project. We request that an administrative draft of the Draft Environmental Impact Report be sent.</li> </ul>	3.5 Public Utilities and Energy; 3.10 Safety and Security; 7.2 Agency Consultation
Darrin Polhemus, Deputy Director Division of Water Quality, California State Water Resources Control Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential to adversely impact water quality and beneficial uses</li> <li>State Water Board will issue certifications for all sections of HST system</li> <li>Projects subject to State Water Board permitting must avoid and minimize impacts to all waters of the State to the maximum extent practicable and ensure no net loss of wetlands</li> <li>Draft EIR/EIS must identify selected routes, all project infrastructure, and all waters of the state</li> <li>Ensure that all responsible agencies under CEQA are consulted</li> <li>Project design should include scientifically based buffers</li> <li>When avoidance is infeasible, specify construction and maintenance measures to minimize disturbance</li> </ul>	3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands; 3.7 Hydrology and Water Resources; 3.16 Cumulative Impacts

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mitigate unavoidable impacts, Draft EIR/EIS should discuss likely mitigation approaches</li> <li>▪ Effects to aquatic resources should be evaluated using a watershed approach</li> <li>▪ incorporate low impact development</li> <li>▪ Consideration of effects of proposed change in flow on current patterns, water circulation, normal water fluctuation, salinity, changes to bottom contours or hydrologic regime.</li> <li>▪ Water quality considerations should be included.</li> <li>▪ Describe potential impacts to animal and plant species habitat and commit to habitat preservation measures that protect water quality species movement and habitat needs</li> <li>▪ Include provisions for inspecting and monitoring the project for environmental compliance, suggested qualifications for inspectors</li> <li>▪ Avoid special areas, areas of ecological integrity</li> <li>▪ Discuss cumulative effects and incorporate design modifications that reestablish or improve on current environmental conditions to lessen cumulative effects</li> </ul>	
Jeff Denham, 12 <sup>th</sup> Senatorial District, California State Senate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transportation is a major issue in the Central Valley and throughout all of California. Traffic and congestion plague our roads and highways, and contribute to air pollution. Bringing jobs to the Central Valley is also critical as our region faces record unemployment.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.2 Air Quality; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice
<b>REGIONAL AGENCIES</b>		
James Herota, Staff Environmental Scientist, Floodway Protection Section, Division of Flood Management, Central Valley Flood Protection Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The jurisdiction of the Central Valley Flood Protection Board includes the Central Valley, including all tributaries and distributaries of the Sacramento River and the San Joaquin River, and designated floodways. A Board permit is required prior to starting the work within the Board's jurisdiction for the placement, construction, reconstruction, removal, or abandonment of any landscaping, culvert, bridge, conduit, fence, projection, fill, embankment, building, structure, obstruction, encroachment, excavation, the planting, or removal of vegetation, and any repair or maintenance that involves cutting into the levee and existing structures that predate permitting or where it is necessary to establish the conditions normally imposed by permitting.</li> </ul>	3.7 Hydrology and Water Resources
Arnaud Marjollet, Permit Services Manager, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The project may be subject to District Rule 9510 (Indirect Source Review) requiring the Authority to submit information that enables the District to quantify construction, area and operation emissions, and potentially mitigate a portion of the emissions</li> </ul>	3.2 Air Quality

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES</b>		
Dan Maddalena, President, Chowchilla Water District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oppose route west of Highway 99 (A3)</li> <li>Lack of outreach to Water District constituents</li> <li>Supports high-speed rail concept but not if it destroys farms, rural houses, water district facilities, and other facilities essential to area remaining a viable economic base</li> <li>Easements and rights of way for rail facilities already exist</li> </ul>	3.7 Hydrology and Water Resources; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Justin White, Mayor, City of Chowchilla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chowchilla is in the unique position of planning for the connection of the east-west and north-south fast train system within our Sphere of Influence. As such we will be potentially impacted by not just one route, but two routes traversing our City. Because of this unique design feature of you system we are concerned, about the impacts on our transportation system connectivity, existing and future land use patterns, and economic impacts to residential, industrial, commercial, and public facilities in our existing City and in this City's immediate growth areas.</li> <li>Both of these alternatives are superior to the proposed route in the NOP: Growth in Chowchilla would not be overly impacted; planned regional and local circulation systems would not be compromised; it would be consistent with the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint; minimize the potential for encountering endangered species; generally consistent with the grasslands issues to the west; and avoids potential conflict with the Chowchilla Airport. These alternatives also promote the objectives of the Authority in that more surface alignments can be implemented reducing elevated and depressed construction; greater acceptance and cooperation by affected local governments and stakeholder; sharing of cost by local governments (Chowchilla would share in the cost of surface rail access to the maintenance facility).</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use; Chapter 5 Project Costs and Operations
Ashley Swearingin, Mayor, City of Fresno	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The downtown Fresno HST station is an integral part of our revitalization efforts and will improve air quality and farmland preservation through intensified mixed use development that is served by alternative forms of inter- and intra-public transportation services including Fresno Area Express, Greyhound, Amtrak and High Speed Rail.</li> </ul>	3.2 Air Quality; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
David J. Merchen, Community Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The existing UP tracks bisect the City of Madera, presenting not only a physical obstacle, but also a cultural barrier in the City. Significant impacts associated with environmental justice would be certain.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.2 Air Quality; 3.3 Noise and Vibration;

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Director, City of Madera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The UP alignment would disrupt the functionality of Madera's historic downtown, including its central business district.</li> <li>▪ The existing BNSF tracks run through and along established rural neighborhoods on the east side of the City's Planning Area. Establishing HSR facilities along the BNSF corridor would physically divide existing neighborhoods. Some of these neighborhoods serve what is primarily an environmental justice community.</li> <li>▪ The BNSF alignment will interfere with the primary, long-term growth pattern of the City set by the presence of prime agricultural land west of the City.</li> <li>▪ The proposed alignments create the Chowchilla Triangle and would become a barrier around the city. The east-west alignment along Avenue 24 would split the two State Correctional Facilities. Using the right-of-way or adjacent right-of-way to be acquired of the UPRR would decimate the Chowchilla Downtown.</li> <li>▪ The potential impacts and mitigation measures on circulation systems and public services need to be evaluated. Specific features necessary to accommodate the needs of affected agencies along the HSR route need to be identified in direct consultation with those agencies.</li> <li>▪ The project-level analysis should evaluate the impact of the alternative alignments on the existing and planned land uses for each alignment. Design characteristics which have the potential to reduce or eliminate impacts should be prioritized over measures which would be implemented "off-site". To the extent that future development is expected to provide physical setbacks or to incorporate noise attenuation or other design features to mitigate impacts, we would look for these measures to be called out in detail and include the cost of implementation.</li> <li>▪ The City of Madera is supportive of the HSR Authority's action to rapidly create and implement a "Coordination Plan".</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use; 3.14 Aesthetics and Visual Quality; Chapter 7 Public and Agency Involvement
Barbara Goodwin, Executive Director, Council of Fresno County Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potential impacts of high-speed rail on farmland must be analyzed and minimized. Existing railroad rights-of-way should be utilized because they would be least disruptive to farmland.</li> <li>▪ In addition to non-express trains, at least five (5) of the daily "express trains" in each direction must stop in Fresno to accommodate commuters to the major metropolitan areas.</li> <li>▪ The high-speed rail system should still consider accommodating truck trailers and containers, thereby reducing congestion on highways and improving air quality. Freight service should be feasible at time when it does not interfere with passenger service. The greater the system's freight capability, the greater its financial viability.</li> <li>▪ Construction of lengthy overpasses and/or underpasses through the smaller cities of Fowler, Selma and Kingsburg would jeopardize the viability of their downtown business, given the size of those towns relative to construction.</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use; Chapter 5 Project Costs and Operations
Mitzi Molina,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Should CHSRA anticipate receiving drainage service from the District it will be required to</li> </ul>	3.7 Hydrology and

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Engineer, Fresno Flood Control District	contribute its pro-rata share of the cost and/or construction of the drainage system that will mitigate the impacts of the project on the storm drainage system. Any proposed relocation, construction of proposed or reconstruction of existing storm drainage facilities will need to be reviewed and approved by the District prior to implementation. Any proposed revisions in location of rail lines through areas that have existing or proposed storm drainage facilities shall be designed such that there are not adverse impacts to the passage of storm water to the adjacent roadways and existing or proposed storm drainage pipelines and inlets. Revisions in the rail lines that alter historical drainage patterns shall require a major storm study. The District will need to review and approve the final improvements plans (i.e. grading, street improvement and storm drain facilities) for the proposed project that lie within the District's boundaries to insure consistency with the approved Storm Drainage Master Plan.	Water Resources

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Rick Cosyns, Vice President, Madera-Chowchilla Water and Power Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request time to consider new route (A3) which appears to wreak havoc on existing operations and that of their constituents.</li> </ul>	3.7 Hydrology and Water Resources; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Julia D. Berry, Executive Director, Madera County Farm Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strongly oppose Alternative A3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the process of identifying the alternative did not include the Madera County Farm Bureau</li> <li>it ignores property lines and cuts diagonally through parcels, potentially make them too small to be profitable</li> <li>it is not compatible with the stringent state laws regarding application of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides</li> <li>irrigation canals and irrigation systems will be interrupted and costly to reconfigure</li> <li>wind impacts on flowering trees and bee pollination will decrease yields</li> <li>farmland is not replaceable and there is no true mitigation for farmland loss.</li> </ul> </li> <li>HST must value the priorities of rural peoples equal with urbanites, especially in the Central Valley where agriculture production leads in its contribution to the tax base.</li> </ul>	3.7 Hydrology and Water Resources; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Patricia Taylor, Executive Director, Madera County Transportation Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the regional land use and transportation planning efforts conducted locally in support of the Regional Blueprint when developing the EIR/EIS for both HST segments.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Rayburn Beach, RMA Director, Madera County Resource Management Agency Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Madera County has reviewed both the Burlington Northern Santa Fe and the Union Pacific route proposals. These routes could result in massive degradation of our existing small farming communities of Fairmead, Trigo, and Berenda. The proposed route would essentially destroy these communities by eliminating their ability for growth and prosperity resulting in a potential environmental justice issue.</li> <li>Eliminate any feasible development associated with the other side of the tracks due to the high infrastructure costs associated with crossing the High Speed Rail.</li> <li>How will the High Speed Rail adversely impact economic development throughout the Central Valley?</li> <li>Is there the potential for the Central Valley to become a service economy with jobs being</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use; Chapter 5 Project Costs and Operations



Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	<p>restricted to the existing large urban centers connected by the High Speed Rail such as Los Angeles and the City of San Francisco?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proposed route will permanently divide and isolate the minority communities from the rest of the City</li> <li>▪ Madera County does not feel that the High Speed Rail will carry enough traffic to offset the tremendous cost to the State of California.</li> <li>▪ The land use densities being served by the High Speed Rail are far below the minimum required to provide the necessary ridership to be successful. This will result in the need to increase land use densities in an area that cannot provide the adequate water resources or basic infrastructure to allow for the type of development. Increased development within the Central Valley will further denigrate our local air quality.</li> </ul>	
Diedre F. Kelsey, Chairman, Merced County Board of Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The County believes that the High Speed Rail Project, as a whole, will have substantial benefits for the County of Merced and the State.</li> <li>▪ The County offers to assist the California High Speed Rail Authority in organizing regional public agencies on critical topics of shared interest relating to HST, such as the Castle Maintenance Facility.</li> <li>▪ EIR/EIS must include a comprehensive analysis of the Project's consistency with the County General Plan. For Rural designated areas, impacts to agricultural and open space resources will, to a large degree, determine General Plan consistency. For urban designated area, the Project's consistency with the goals, objectives, and policies of the particular community plan is critical</li> <li>▪ It appears that construction of the tracks and operation of the trains may have land use conflicts with existing uses in the unincorporated communities of Santa Nella and Volta and to designated Highway Interchange Centers along the Interstate 5 corridor. The EIRs/EISs should analyze these impacts</li> <li>▪ This Project has the potential to greatly enhance the County's circulation system by reducing overall traffic in the County. However, interruption of traffic flow at local intersections has the potential to add significant delays to local traffic circulation. The EIR/EIS should study these impacts and the Authority should ensure that the Project is designed, by fully grade-separated crossings, routing and other design and mitigation measures to minimize the disruption of the HST to the County's existing circulation system.</li> <li>▪ The EIR/EIS should fully evaluate the Project's potential to increase local air pollution and the potential conflicts with the County's General Plan policies designed to reduce air pollution</li> <li>▪ The Project has the potential to add significant noise impacts. Noise generated by this Project should be evaluated in the context of the County's noise exposure standards.</li> <li>▪ The proposed Project, as generally routed, has the potential to affect open space, habitat,</li> </ul>	<p>3.1 Transportation; 3.2 Air Quality; 3.3 Noise and Vibration; 3.4 EMI/EMF; 3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands; Hydrology and Water Resources; 3.9 Hazardous Waste, Materials; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use; 3.13 Parks, Recreation and Open Space; 7.2 Agency Consultation</p>

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	<p>wetland and aesthetic resources. This EIR/EIS needs to carefully study this potential effect and minimize any adverse impact to these resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The County recommends that the study corridor for the Project be expanded from 100 to 500 feet. A study corridor for 500 feet is advisable to adequately analyze potentially significant impacts such as noise, air quality and other impacts.</li> <li>▪ To the extent that the Project proposes to increase impervious surfaces in the County, the EIR/EIS should evaluate the impacts to groundwater supply and the potential for the Project to cause further degradation to groundwater quality in the County</li> <li>▪ The County is in the midst of a General Plan Update and will require close coordination with the Authority to ensure that the Projects are evaluated against current General Plan policy</li> <li>▪ It is critical that the EIRs/EISs examine the relationship of the Projects to the University Community Plan and ensure that the Projects are integrated with and support the circulation element of the UCP</li> <li>▪ The County requests the EIR/EIS include an urban decay analysis as required by CEQA and an Environmental Justice analysis required by NEPA. The County requests that the EIR/EIS examine both the potential for the siting of the maintenance facility in the County's Castle redevelopment area to prevent the County from reducing blight, leading to continued urban decay impacts in that area. Examine the potential environmental justice issues of siting the maintenance facility in a designated redevelopment area. The County also requests that the Authority examine the potential environmental justice issues involved in siting the final track layout.</li> </ul>	
Jerry O'Banion, Merced County Board of Supervisors, District 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I support expedited construction of this project as a mean of relieving future traffic congestion, improvement of our air quality and resulting in more desperately needed local jobs.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.2 Air Quality; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice
Diana Westmoreland-Pedrozo, Executive Director, Merced County Farm Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The predominant land that is going to be impacted will be agricultural land that is privately owned. Provide for fair and just compensation for any loss of agriculture land and the ability to farm that land in its totality. Splitting segments of land up has an impact, long-tem, to the owner-operator of that land.</li> <li>▪ Farming has been able to be a good complement to wetlands, and the impact of any project needs to take that into consideration.</li> </ul>	3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
<b>ORGANIZATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS, &amp; BUSINESSES</b>		
Tom Bailey, President, Fresno Area Residents for Rail Consolidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Routing the express tracks through downtown Fresno will create excess noise and, be very expensive with disruptive construction.</li> <li>A west side alignment would have definite safety advantages.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.3 Noise and Vibration; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.10 Safety and Security; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use; Chapter 5 Project Costs and Operations
Bert Crane, Citizens for the Betterment of Merced County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It's good that Merced station is being built downtown and Castle Air Base is being recommended as a Maintenance facility since neither of these properties sacrifice any valuable agricultural land.</li> <li>We want to see this entire project fast tracked due to the huge economic benefits it would create for the Central Valley and the rest of the state.</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Richard Eason, President, Merced Boosters Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help meet California's growing population and travel demands.</li> <li>Improve the movement of people, goods and services throughout the state.</li> <li>Improve capacity for reliable, safe and comfortable travel between major metropolitan areas.</li> <li>Maintain and improve quality of life for citizens of the Valley and of California.</li> <li>Generate jobs for the residents of our state.</li> <li>Help relieve increased traffic congestion.</li> <li>Improve air quality by reducing pollution.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Scott Galbraith, President, Merced County Economic Development Corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New investment and employment generated by the project and sustainable economic development for the cities and county of Merced. In addition to direct employment for construction, new business investment induced by the improved transportation access will add expanded business and consumer services. Property and sales tax revenue from these enterprises will support local public services and help address a chronic unemployment situation.</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Kenneth Gostin, Transportation is for Everyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The impact of high speed rail on greenhouse gas reduction (GHG) reduction is both inconsequential and costly. There is a need for an objective, independent assessment of high speed rail's CO2 impacts.</li> <li>CHSRA 2030 ridership projections are absurdly high.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.2 Air Quality; 3.10 Safety and Security

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For safety reasons, there should be at least 600' separation between freight trains and HST train operations.</li> <li>CHSRA projections indicate that high speed rail would attract from approximately 60 percent to 95 percent of the combined Los Angeles-San Francisco Bay area high speed rail-air market in 2030. The air-diversion estimates are all exceedingly optimistic.</li> </ul>	
Lee Higgins, Chevron Environmental Management Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notified the Authority that formerly active crude oil transportation pipelines of the Tidewater Associated Oil Company and Standard Oil are located along portions of the proposed high speed rail alignment and submitted a map showing the locations</li> <li>Potential for subsurface soil pollution by crude oil, releases are non-hazardous and do not pose significant health risks according to studies done on known sites.</li> <li>Requests GIS data for finalized HST alignment and offered GIS data of locations of former pipelines</li> <li>Requests to be kept informed of project progress</li> </ul>	3.9 Hazardous Wastes, Materials
Angelo Lama, Greater Merced High Speed Rail Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will offer many benefits to our Valley and California. The Committee and its representatives from the County, various Cities, and citizens are currently working together to ensure coordinated support for high speed rail and we look forward to working with the Authority as it moves forward on this important and historic project.</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Nellie McGarry, Co Owner, Russ McGarry Rental Property Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would like this entire project fast tracked due to the huge economic benefits.</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; Chapter 5 Project Costs and Operations
Billy Powell, Business Manager, IBEW 684 (Electrical Workers union)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The IBEW will help in any way possible to get the HST started and completed.</li> </ul>	7.1 Public Involvement and Outreach
Mauricio H. Rehbein, Owner Bilingual Tax Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We feel that the high speed rail system will:</li> <li>Help meet California's growing population and travel demands.</li> <li>Improve the movement of people, goods and services throughout the state.</li> <li>Improve capacity for reliable, safe and comfortable travel between major metropolitan areas.</li> <li>Maintain and improve quality of life for citizens of the Valley of California.</li> <li>Generate jobs for the residents of our state and Merced in particular.</li> <li>Help relieve increased traffic congestion.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.2 Air Quality; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
John R. Weech, Associate Council, California Farm Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve air quality by reducing pollution.</li> <li>▪ The agricultural lands surrounding the rout must be accurately and completely depicted. The California Department of Conservation (“DoC”), through the farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (“FMMP”), monitors changes in Prime farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance. The IER/EIS must incorporate the FMMP Maps as a basis for its analysis. The acreage of farmland that will be converted and/or impacted from this project must be included in the EIR/EIS. Additionally, any other changes in the existing environment due to the project location or nature, could result in conversion of agricultural to nonagricultural use must also be examined.</li> <li>▪ The Farm Bureau also recommends that an agricultural impact discussion for areas outside Important Farmland Map boundaries be based on the agricultural land definition in the Williamson Act. This would also be in accordance with the definition of “agricultural land” in CEQA.</li> <li>▪ The analysis should consider the construction of ancillary facilities and supporting infrastructure, as well as growth-inducing impacts. The permanent and temporary disturbances caused directly by construction activities must be fully analyzed in the EIR/EIS.</li> <li>▪ All impacts to agricultural resources must be fully mitigated. Sufficient funding must be allocated for mitigation of agricultural land loss on a per acre basis.</li> <li>▪ This project must comply with the Williamson Act.</li> <li>▪ Public acquisition of property for this project must be limited.</li> <li>▪ The EIR/EIS must also analyze the impacts of this project to water quality. This analysis must involve an examination of water supply impacts and how that might impact the water supply otherwise available for production agriculture as well as alternative for mitigation such as increased recharge.</li> <li>▪ Social and economic impacts must be analyzed. The siting of a high-speed rail through agricultural lands will greatly impact the agricultural industry as a whole, as well as local rural communities.</li> <li>▪ We would like to request timely notice of all future meetings and review dates regarding the EIR/EIS and subsequent meetings that are part of the CEQA/NEPA process regarding the proposed complex.</li> </ul>	3.7 Hydrology and Water Resources; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use; Chapter 7 Public and Agency Involvement
Jerry Wilmoth, General Manager Network Infrastructure, Union Pacific Railroad Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Union Pacific’s rail network in the Bay Area and the Central Valley is vital to the economic health of California and the nation as a whole. Union Pacific’s rail service to customers in the Bay Area and Central Valley is crucial to the future success and growth of those customers.</li> <li>▪ Major rail shippers are located along the Fresno Subdivision. The high speed rail alignment on or adjacent to the Fresno Subdivision potentially would terminate Union Pacific’s ability to serve these shippers, and future shippers needing rail service, leading to serious economic</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	loss to shippers, consumers, the state and the railroad.	
<b>INDIVIDUALS / PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS</b>		
Joe Aramburu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Courses could be set-up at community colleges in the valley for servicing and working on the trains to prepare a good work force and promote jobs in the valley.</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice
Sam Armentrout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The high speed train will create jobs and eliminate thousands of car trips on highway 99.</li> <li>Fast clean transportation and reduced pollution in the 2<sup>nd</sup> worst air pollution area in the nation.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.2 Air Quality; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice
Lee Ayres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate the HSR station design with the downtown specific plan &amp; the proposed National Parks &amp; Forests District.</li> </ul>	3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use; 3.13 Parks, Recreation and Open Space; 7.2 Agency Consultation
Stephen Balentine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am extremely excited about the prospects of high-speed rail coming to Fresno and the state. Please consider extended hours of service.</li> </ul>	Chapter 5 Project Costs and Operations
James Barnes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to lead the nation by setting the standard for 21<sup>st</sup> transportation, clean reliable and efficient.</li> <li>Our UC Merced students would benefit significantly in being able to access jobs, internships and family currently only served by bus transportation.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Mark Bowden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We need to move forward with this project.</li> </ul>	Chapter 1 Purpose and Need and Project Objectives; Chapter 5 Project Costs and Operations
John M. Bramble	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The value of the project for economic development will be immense.</li> <li>The improvement of travel for UC Merced students will be helpful and beneficial to air quality.</li> <li>This project assists with air quality and conservation of energy resources.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.5 Public Utilities and Energy; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice
Donald Leroy Brown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use rail materials that are manufactured in our United States.</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice



Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Allen Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a need for plentiful low cost parking at all stations.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Gabriel Coelho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I own 4 residences and a well established dairy farm, through which you plan to run the train. The proposed route runs directly through all and I would be put out of business. Replacing the dairy is almost if not impossible since the permitting process along with environmental regulation is cost prohibitive and right now Madera and Merced counties are not issuing new dairy permits. Please contact me so we can discuss this matter.</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Vincent Correll	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Move it along. You will not please everyone.</li> </ul>	Chapter 7 Public and Agency Involvement
Jody Davidson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing railroad lines have used many toxic substances over the years; the EIR/EIS must consider the following: a complete soil analysis must be done for all toxic substances.</li> <li>Trains running at high velocity will create un-natural winds which are capable of damaging urban gardens and vegetation, natural grasslands, and farmlands. This could create extreme conditions for grass fires. This could cause farmers and residents to use more water at a time when our state is in a drought.</li> <li>Building stations in otherwise rural/farm areas of the state would further burden our water resources, both to the delta and groundwater supplies, by creating sprawl. All measures must be taken to protect all groundwater and watersheds from contamination. If any kind of tunneling or excavation is done which impacts groundwater, I insist that a certified hydrologist from USGS conduct a complete hydrological mapping of this region.</li> <li>Investigate potential health impacts to citizens and wildlife from continuous exposure to strong electromagnetic field radiation (EMF), and RF. Additionally any high-voltage DC transmission (HVDC) that interconnect wind farms, power generating plants, and transformers from power generation and energy storage cells must be thoroughly assessed and mitigated.</li> <li>Please note that sound travels farther on elevated tracks. There is a distinct aerodynamic sound even at lower speeds with high speed rail. Existing acoustical studies from other countries may not be used.</li> </ul>	3.3 Noise and Vibration; 3.4 EMI/EMF; 3.7 Hydrology and Water Resources; 3.9 Hazardous Wastes, Materials; 3.10 Safety and Security
John R. Donaldson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decreasing our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions must be a serious priority. Global warming is the <u>most</u> serious problem before us and the world.</li> </ul>	3.2 Air Quality
Evelyn Eagleton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The high speed rail would be beneficial to the valley. It is desperately needed!</li> </ul>	Chapter 1 Purpose and Need and Project Objectives
Keith Ensminger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The elevated expressways currently planned for urban areas will become the predominate skyline in many cities.</li> <li>The elevated structures have the potential to create much more accidents if trains were to fly</li> </ul>	3.10 Safety and Security; 3.14 Aesthetics and Visual

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	40 feet through the air before landing on the ground.	Quality
Kim Forrest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The EIR states 10000 acres of mitigation lands would be purchased. Speculators &amp; developers are buying the land already, &amp; landowners are already refusing to sell conservation easements to FWS.</li> <li>USFWS has provided in-depth comments in 2004 &amp; 2007; they aren't on your website.</li> </ul>	3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands; 7.2 Agency Consultation
Mr. & Mrs. Franey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Terrific project to create jobs &amp; save environment.</li> </ul>	Chapter 1 Purpose and Need and Project Objectives
Jeff Freitas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use Google Earth/maps for public outreach &amp; feedback. Example: posting preliminary alignments on Google Earth, then solicit public comment.</li> </ul>	
Garold D. Giersch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HST through the City will separate the west side from the east side and cause miles of travel to go from east to west.</li> <li>How can grade separations be constructed with high speed trains traveling through the City with no stop sites?</li> <li>Will the environmental reports address all the City Master Plans and conflicts with growth?</li> <li>How will HST benefit the people of Chowchilla?</li> <li>How do you claim the number of users from Chowchilla that would use HST?</li> <li>What are the benefits considering that the HST will not serve workers traveling from Chowchilla to Merced; to Madera; to Fresno daily on the work force?</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Gorecki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The prospect of the growth &amp; job generation.</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Pete Halver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am looking forward to the high speed train project. California needs this project to help get us back to work and focused on a future for all.</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice
Jim Harris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concern regarding running passenger trains along side freight train – derailments.</li> <li>Increase of hazardous materials shipments and the spills that occur when handling hazardous materials</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.9 Hazardous Wastes, Materials 3.10 Safety and Security
Lauren J. Knapp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The information put forth by the California High Speed Rail Authority, both in print and online, clearly shows the High Speed Train route to be along the Hwy 99 corridor.</li> <li>Formally request that the comment period for the proposed California High Speed Train System be extended a minimum of 120 days and that additional public meeting be scheduled</li> </ul>	3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands; 3.12 Local Growth, Station

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	<p>in Merced, Madera and Fresno.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher Cost: The Burlington/Santa Fe alignment is a longer route.</li> <li>Threatened and Endangered Species: The Burlington/Santa Fe alignment traverses the designated Vernal Pool Critical Habitat and the Madera Vernal Pool Recovery Core Area identified in the Vernal Pool Recovery Plan. Additionally, HST would adversely affect thousands of acres of pristine vernal pool wetlands and habitat for vernal pool fairy shrimp, vernal pool tadpole shrimp, midvalley fairy shrimp, California tiger salamander (CTS) and western spadefoot toad. The disturbance of upland grassland areas would adversely affect adult CTS and western spadefoot toad sheltering habitat, western burrowing owl and San Joaquin kit fox denning and foraging habitat and a San Joaquin kit fox migration corridor.</li> <li>Infrastructure: much of the infrastructure that would be necessary to support California's High Speed Train system, such as food, lodging and automobile access, already exists along the Southern Pacific alignment.</li> <li>Urban Sprawl: Some of the best farmland in Central California borders the Burlington/Santa Fe alignment. This plan will inevitably draw development east as well and accelerate the loss of this irreplaceable resource.</li> </ul>	<p>Planning and Land Use; Chapter 5 Project Costs and Operations; 7.1 Public Involvement and Outreach;</p>
Sherry Knapp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BNSF – High speed rail road would fragment the endangered species habitat, here on our property, and on the adjacent property. Among these species are fairy shrimp, California tiger salamander, western spadefoot toad, western burrowing owl, kit fox, and owl's clover, Bald Eagles nesting.</li> <li>Under the impression from the map that was sent out, mapping out the route and showing that the new tracks would follow the Union Pacific tracks along the Highway 99, that is would not be in our area. Many of us feel this is very misleading. The folks along the Burlington/Santa Fe from Merced to Fresno need to be notified that you are now considering our area. The Authority needs to set up a meeting with all of us.</li> </ul>	<p>3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands; 7.1 Public Involvement and Outreach</p>
Julie Linxwiler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will the entire route through Fresno be elevated? Or will local streets be submerged under on-grade tracks? (noise, glare, dust, turbulence)</li> <li>When is it projected that property acquisition will begin?</li> <li>Air quality: how do the trains emissions "fit in" with the Valley's already filthy air? Or are there emissions?</li> <li>Where will the electricity for this project come from?</li> </ul>	<p>Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.2 Air Quality; 3.3 Noise; 3.5 Public Utilities and Energy; 3.14 Aesthetics and Visual Quality</p>
Joan Lipton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speed up the process.</li> </ul>	<p>Chapter 1 Purpose and Need and Project Objectives</p>
Lia N. McGinnis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will this create jobs for our local community?</li> <li>Will construction be opened up to local contractors or is a non-USA company handling the</li> </ul>	<p>3.10 Safety and Security; 3.11</p>

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	<p>construction?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will this impact our agricultural communities and the growth?</li> <li>What happens if the train derails somehow – how close is the train to residents in homes and livestock?</li> </ul>	Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Mike McLaughlin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many benefits.</li> </ul>	Chapter 1 Purpose and Need and Project Objectives
Alfredo Mendoza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committed to provide services and send skilled, qualified, and knowledgeable individuals to the project at the beginning.</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice;
John Pierre Mendoza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The voters voted on the majority by the million indicating that they wanted this project done now. Move On.</li> </ul>	Chapter 1 Purpose and Need and Project Objectives
Kai Moua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I support the California High Speed Train Project: will benefit the people and the next generation. Speed up the project timeline.</li> </ul>	Chapter 1 Purpose and Need and Project Objectives
Kathleen Satomi Omachi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I support you and offer any assistance we can give you to make this dream a solid reality.</li> </ul>	7.1 Public Involvement and Outreach
Billy Powell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The IBEW members are the highest skilled and motivated electricians in the area and look forward to making history in our great state</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice
Roland Ramirez	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will help reduce the cars on the road and create an efficient transportation environment that will support dynamic growth in the region.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Mary K Rau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All in favor of a high speed train.</li> </ul>	7.1 Public Involvement and Outreach
Mauricio H. Rehbein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High Speed Rail will create a new phase in the economy for not only Merced but the surrounding communities and will alleviate the congestion in our highways and to avoid more pollution.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.2 Air Quality; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
		Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Carolyn Romersa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The High Speed Rail in Canada and Europe are either underground or elevated. The HST as proposed here would make the same mistake as is already in place: going through the middle of towns.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Gregory K. Rust Jr.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will the High Speed rail tie together at the 152 &amp; 99 area. Maps are not very clear on the land you are going to need.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Anna M. Sanchez	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many air quality benefits with the HST.</li> </ul>	3.2 Air Quality
Phillip Sanchez	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great alternative to driving, Amtrak, or flying to northern and southern California.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Michele Stehly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The map indicated the proposed track would run along Highway 99. Since we were not notified about the switch from Highway 99 to the Santa Fe line, we need more time to voice our opinion.</li> </ul>	7.1 Public Involvement and Outreach
Lizzy Tello	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Happy that someone here finally decided to do something about the congestion, greenhouse gas emissions and travel time.</li> <li>What environmental impact will this construction have?</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.2 Air Quality; Chapter 3 Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Mitigation Measures
Greg Thompson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't neglect long term parking.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Diane Thornhill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I support this project.</li> </ul>	7.1 Public Involvement and Outreach
Frank Vierra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would like to see the rail line completed at the same time from Sacramento to Los Angeles.</li> <li>This system is greatly needed for the growing populations of the Central Valley.</li> <li>What are the problems with noise and vibrations?</li> </ul>	Chapter 1 Purpose and Need and Project Objectives; 3.3 Noise and Vibrations
Diana Westmoreland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A statewide project needs statewide policies that will protect the farmland that provides the ability to feed ourselves. The state policies need to stop sprawling development in the local jurisdictions. Incentives for thoughtful development must accompany and HST project.</li> <li>The HST cannot be used to commute people from the SJ Valley to jobs in LA or the Bay area.</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth,

Commenter	Protection of the Environment – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	The SJ Valley is the last one there are no more valleys over the hills. Protecting our working landscapes must be our #1 priority for all California residents.	Station Planning and Land Use
Herb Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100 million riders = approx. 3 times state population estimate may be overly enthusiastic.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation

Commenter	Alignment and Station Alternatives – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
<b>FEDERAL AGENCIES</b>		
Congressman Dennis Cardoza, US House of Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strongly urge the Authority to incorporate the selection of a Main Repair and Maintenance Facility and related test tracks in Merced County at the Castle Airport, Aviation and Development Center, also known as the former Castle Air Force Base.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
<b>STATE AGENCIES</b>		
Jeff Denham, 12 <sup>th</sup> Senatorial District, California State Senate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The High-Speed Rail project will help address these issues when the project comes through Merced, and particularly if a maintenance hub is located at the castle Commerce Center, located at the former Castle Air Force Base.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES</b>		
Greg Wellman, City Manager, Atwater, California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Atwater supports the designation of Castle Air Force Base as a maintenance hub for the high-speed rail project. The City of Atwater is currently a regional provider of water and wastewater services including Castle Air Force Base. Merced County demographics and economically-disadvantaged position, including a current unemployment rate of 19 percent and rising, median household income, and limited educational and healthcare access provides a powerful backdrop for our pleas on behalf of this general area for economic and social development.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice
<b>REGIONAL AGENCIES</b>		
Dan Maddalena, President, Chowchilla Water District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oppose route west of Highway 99 (A3)</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives



Commenter	Alignment and Station Alternatives – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Justin White, Mayor, City of Chowchilla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proposed alignments compromise the community whereas alternate alignments can be considered which will have less impact on existing uses and still achieve the target travel time for the San Francisco to Los Angeles run. One such alignment may be south of Highway 152 in the Chowchilla area. The proposed alignments create the Chowchilla Triangle and would become a barrier around the City with the fences required to protect the train rights-of-way. The east-west alignment along Avenue 24 would split the two State Correctional Facilities that lie east of Highway 99. Using the right-of-way or adjacent right-of-way to be acquired of the UPRR would decimate the Chowchilla Downtown and waste the resources the Chowchilla Redevelopment Agency has put into Downtown Revitalization.</li> <li>▪ The BNSF right-of-way alignment or an alignment south of Highway 152 is suggested. This alternative alignment is south of Highway 152, misses Fairmead, crosses Highway 99 near the new interchange, misses the prisons, and provides an opportunity for a maintenance facility in several locations, one west of Highway 99 and another in the “triangle” formed by the northbound-southbound split.</li> <li>▪ A second alternative moves the north-south alignment farther to the west to avoid substantial isolation of Chowchilla. This alignment also provides for additional maintenance facility locations west of Highway 99 and one north of Highway 152.</li> <li>▪ A common interest may be found between Chowchilla and the Authority in the maintenance facility north of Highway 152, west of Highway 99 in that Chowchilla is already planning to construct a railroad spur to serve its industrial area north of Highway 152 and west of Highway 99. Water and sewer service is readily available at this site within the timeframe that the maintenance facility would be constructed.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Ashley Swearengen, Mayor, City of Fresno	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proposed Bay Area-Central Valley corridor should be designed to go through and have an appropriate stop in downtown Fresno.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives

Commenter	Alignment and Station Alternatives – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
David J. Merchen, Community Development Director, City of Madera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A corridor west of the City of Madera has the potential to avoid several debilitating impacts that would otherwise be created by establishing HST tracks on either the BNSF or UP alignments. The EIR/EIS should consider a westerly alignment, and its ability to address and avoid impacts.</li> <li>The east-west alignment north of Highway 152 does not consider the City of Chowchilla's General Plan. An alternative alignment south of Highway 152 needs to be evaluated, in order to determine its potential to avoid unnecessary conflicts.</li> <li>The City offers its support for placement of the HST maintenance facility in one of several alternate locations within Madera County. Benefits to the HST system are available by placing a maintenance facility in the County, stemming from the area's central location, the availability of freeway and rail access, and the ability to place the maintenance facility at or near the point where the east-west and north-south lines meet.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Alan Weaver, Director, Fresno County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County of Fresno supports the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) alignment south of Fresno as the less disruptive option for the smaller State Route 99-corridor cities. The BNSF rail corridor also has less impact on local agricultural lands and operations and transportation systems.</li> <li>Support of a downtown Fresno station along the UP corridor.</li> <li>Supports a local maintenance yard and/or operations facility for high-speed rail services in Fresno County.</li> <li>Fresno County is open to the Authority's consideration of an additional station in Tulare County, provided that this option does not require a return to the Union Pacific (UP) corridor or a new green-field alignment in Fresno County. We do support a minor diversion from the BNSF corridor in south Fresno County to avoid the community of Laton, provided the alignment returns to the BNSF in as short a distance as feasible.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.1 Transportation; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Barbara Goodwin, Executive Director, Council of Fresno County Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fresno County can provide the best location for this facility and stand ready to work with the Authority and the consultant team to identify and secure the best site possible.</li> <li>Alternatives defined in the project level environmental document must be appropriate for rail consolidation as well as the high-speed train. There must be an alternative that provides for a bypass loop/corridor west of the metropolitan area that could be used to relocate one or more of the rail freight services and high-speed train express tracks.</li> <li>Station in Fresno County should be located in downtown Fresno.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Julia D Berry, Executive Director, Madera County Farm Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strongly oppose A3.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives

Commenter	Alignment and Station Alternatives – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Patricia Taylor, Executive Director, Madera County Transportation Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integration of the High Speed Train system with the Metro-Rural Loop concept currently being explored by the Mid-Valley Multi Modal partnership.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.1 Transportation
Max Rodriguez, Chairman, Madera County Board of Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why Madera County would make a great home for the High-Speed Train maintenance and storage facility: Central location, several possible sites, an able and willing workforce and easy commute for workers from adjoining counties, home to the Madera Community College and close proximity to the University of California, Merced and California State University, Fresno campuses and their respective resources, strong local support, low land costs and flexibility in infrastructure provision.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use; Chapter 5 Project Costs and Operations
Rayburn Beach, RMA Director, Madera County Resource Management Agency Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can a new alignment be studied in combination with a Highway 99 western truck route by-pass?</li> <li>Madera County would like to offer our support for the proposed alignment located west of Highway 99. A north-south alignment that traverses along the west side of both the City of Madera, Fairmead, and the City of Chowchilla would preserve historical sites and avoid destroying downtown areas, avoid physically dividing existing communities or facilities which would lead to environmental justice issues. Avoids dividing the community of Fairmead and separating the Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) and the Valley State Prison for Women (VSPW), create an urban boundary preserving prime agricultural lands along the west side. Result in cheaper construction costs. Avoid the issue of a merger between the two currently proposed alignments, facilitate construction of a Caltrans Highway 99 truck by-pass route, and provide ease of access to proposed rail stations.</li> <li>An east-west alignment located south of Highway 152 would avoid impacts on the growth patterns and service needs of the City of Chowchilla and possibly avoid wetlands located west of Chowchilla.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use

Commenter	Alignment and Station Alternatives – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Diedre F. Kelsey, Chairman, Merced County Board of Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate alternative alignments that minimize conflicts with the County's General Plan and RTP. The County is especially concerned that the Project EIR/EIS identify and evaluate alternative locations for the proposed maintenance facilities. The County would also appreciate an explanation from the Authority of the criteria that it will use in selecting the location of the Merced station</li> <li>The EIR/EIS must carefully and completely evaluate the impacts of the project to these programs. Relationship with and conformity to goals, objectives, and policies of the Castle Re-Use Plan. Relationship to on-site rail facilities that currently exist at Castle. Relationship with the Castle Airport layout plan and Airport Master Plan being prepared by the County. Impacts to existing land uses and development within Castle. Potential economic impacts to Castle and County redevelopment activities. Relationship to existing environmental clean-up activities at Castle.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Jerry O'Banion, Merced County Board of Supervisors, District 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I also support and endorse the actions of the Merced County Board of Supervisors, the Cities of Merced and Atwater in exploring use of former Castle Air Force Base as the maintenance hub for the system. It is a central location for the overall system and has the population and workforce training capabilities to be a genuine asset to the HST system.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
<b>ORGANIZATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS, &amp; BUSINESSES</b>		
Tom Bailey, President, Fresno Area Residents for Rail Consolidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Routing the HST express tracks to the west along with relocating the UP tracks and rail yard.</li> <li>After completion of the above, the vacated UP right-of-way would then be available for construction for the BNSF's new double track corridor (also used by Amtrak,) as well as the two local HST tracks and a new downtown multi-modal station.</li> <li>The vacated UP rail yard in central Fresno would also provide an excellent location for the proposed HST maintenance facility.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Dr. Lee R. Boese Jr, President, Citizens for the Betterment of Merced County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We support a High Speed Rail station in downtown Merced and recommend the former Castle Air Base as a construction and Maintenance facility Hub.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives

Commenter	Alignment and Station Alternatives – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Bert Crane, Citizens for the Betterment of Merced County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We strongly support establishing a High Speed Rail station in downtown Merced and recommend the former Castle Air Base as a construction and Maintenance facility Hub.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Richard Eason, President, Merced Boosters Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We strongly support establishing a high speed rail station near or in the City of Merced and a maintenance hub at or near the former Castle Air Force base.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Kenneth Gostin, Transportation is for Everyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It makes little sense that the high speed train would have to double back after visiting Merced in order to continue south.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Nellie McGarry, Co Owner, Russ McGarry Rental Property Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I support the station in downtown Merced and would definitely recommend the former Castle Air Base as a construction and maintenance facility hub.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Mauricio H. Rehbein, Owner Bilingual Tax Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We support a High Speed Rail system for California. We strongly support establishing a high speed rail station near or in the City of Merced and a maintenance hub at or near the former Castle Air Force base.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
<b>INDIVIDUALS / PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS</b>		
Rico Aguayo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintenance/storage yard located in Fresno County/San Joaquin Valley.</li> <li>Construction of test tracks built in valley first.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Daniel Ainslie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please be sure the stations are located next to or in downtowns, to help promote urban development. Allow this to be a stimulus to further downtown development. Site stations next to freeway on/off ramps, transportation depots, governmental and business centers. If stations are located outside urban cores (downtowns) it will promote greenfield development, and catalyze further gentrification.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Joe Aramburu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A maintenance facility in Fresno would be nice, it would probably be easier and less expensive to build it at Castle AFB.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives

Commenter	Alignment and Station Alternatives – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Jesse Arthur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A maintenance facility should be located at Castle. The land is there and some buildings and this location would not infringe on agricultural land or “future development” land; nor would it interfere with streets, roads or highways.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.1 Transportation; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Lee Ayres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Put HST tracks below grade in Fresno.</li> <li>Locate the HST station in downtown Fresno between G&amp;H</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
John M. Bramble	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prefer a UPRR alignment with station in downtown. (Merced)</li> <li>Preference for maintenance facility at Castle Business center.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Donald Leroy Brown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Put the rail thru the San Joaquin Valley from San Francisco or Oakland to Modesto, Merced, Fresno and Bakersfield to Los Angeles route.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Eddie Clement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Fresno the HST must travel through the downtown area, best if near Chinatown.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Juan Corona	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher consideration should be given to sites that are more ready for a maintenance hub, versus exercising eminent domain and acquiring other sites. Merced County has a prime location at the Castle Commerce Center, and a county and city government that support the project.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Vincent Correll	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the UP tracks through Fresno for the High Speed RR.</li> <li>In cities, put tracks below ground level: 1) deflects sound UP, 2) reduces disturbance of city structures.</li> <li>Put stations DOWNTOWN.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.3 Noise and Vibration; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
John R. Donaldson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A true express route LA – SF, bypassing some or all stations, will be very important for taking traffic off the roads and airlines.</li> </ul>	Chapter 5 Project Costs and Operations
Keith Ensminger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maps for Greenfield alignment. (to the east)</li> <li>Aligning the high speed rail along what is known as the Hwy 65 extension or proposed Eastside Freeway would benefit regional transportation. Leverage construction costs of the high speed rail with the Hwy 65 extension and avoid costly property purchases and subsequent demolition of homes and businesses through urban areas.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; Chapter 5 Project Costs and Operation; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Farley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chowchilla – Since the train will have to slow down for the tight radius at chowchilla, can a station be added.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Tom Freund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owner at “G” St &amp; Inyo, vacant lot 1+ acre. Prefer Fresno station south of ball-park.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives



Commenter	Alignment and Station Alternatives – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Garold D. Giersch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Location of the HST in Chowchilla violates the master plan of the City.</li> <li>Maintenance facility should be located at the junction of the west &amp; north projection in the Chowchilla area, could be south of SR152. The location planned at Ave. 24 is not acceptable.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Gorecki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Put the maintenance hub at Castle AFB.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Jim Harris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue a right away from Mojave over to Taft instead of going over Tehachapi.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Paul Herman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fresno station aligned in downtown Fresno between G Street and H Street and Mono Ave and Tulare Ave. Alignment along Golden State Ave and Highway 99 on the Union Pacific corridor.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Barbara Hoffman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Castle (the old Air Force Base) offers many advantages as a maintenance facility site.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Lauren J. Knapp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using the Burlington/Santa Fe alignment is not the best route.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Sherry Knapp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use Union Pacific lines and put the new high speed rail road along the Highway 99 corridor, where there is already disruption of habitat and wildlife and pollution.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands
Don T. Kojima	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There should be a train stop in Chowchilla. Chowchilla will someday provide many riders on this train. Landowners at the intersection of the Santa Fe and the 152 would be prepared to contribute some of our property to this train stop. We are also interested in the hub/service centers.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Harriet Laulor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Maintenance facility should be at Castle Air force Base.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Alexander Lu-Pon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A downtown Merced station, located along 16<sup>th</sup> St would be a great benefit to the now struggling community.</li> <li>A downtown station in Merced makes the most sense because a station placed at Castle would leave passengers stranded with no existing businesses to suit any needs. The downtown station makes sense also to attract more businesses and jobs to the downtown area.</li> <li>A repair station could still be placed at Castle and generate more jobs out of that facility.</li> <li>The Merced Airport at Castle could expand into a fully functioning airport.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice
Dr. Charles Martin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Madera County/Chowchilla would be a great location for the train to stop.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Alfredo Mendoza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use Merced (former Castle Air Force Base) as the maintenance hub.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
David Pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The first Central Valley stop should be at a location equidistant between the population centers of Merced and Madera; at the existing hub or near the crossing of Highways 99 &amp; 152 (Fairmead, Chowchilla). The awkward spur north up to Merced from the east/west corridor the bay area would not need to be built. The same hub would be a logical location for a railway service/maintenance yard.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Glenn Pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It would be more economical to place the station between Merced and Madera near Hwy 152. This would serve both communities.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives

Commenter	Alignment and Station Alternatives – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Roland Ramirez	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a station in downtown Merced near 16<sup>th</sup> and M St. I support turning the former Castle Air Force Base into a maintenance hub for the rail system.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Mauricio H. Rehbein	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The High Speed Rail together with the Main Base in Atwater will be a great help for workers in many professions.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice
Joe Rivero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Castle would provide an excellent High Speed Rail maintenance facility: longest runways in the state, allows quick &amp; easy access to the largest equipment, materials, parts crews or experts needed to keep the High Speed Rail running or efficiently as possible.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
William C. Sanford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can a route south or Chowchilla possible have a Merced station?</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Greg Thompson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I prefer the UPRR N/S alternative as it better connects the downtown centers of the major cities which can help lead to stronger re-development of these areas.</li> <li>Castle Air Force Base is a good location for the major maintenance facility for the CHSRA system.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Frank Vierra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The maintenance facility needs to be located at the Castle Airbase facility.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
David Weisser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build near I-5 through the valley it would be a lot cheaper. Have tracks branch out into Fresno and Merced.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Herb Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preference for maintenance facility location is Castle.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives

Commenter	Connectivity and Coordination with/Impacts to Other Transportation Facilities – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
<b>FEDERAL AGENCIES</b>		
Tom Plenys, Environmental Review Office, United States Environmental Protection Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Draft EIS should specifically identify how the multiple proposed rail projects in the Central Valley relate to this Project.</li> <li>Address how the proposed Project will insure that potential duplication of efforts and incompatibilities with other rail and/or transit systems will not occur.</li> <li>Identify integration and/or incompatibility of the proposed Project with other existing and proposed projects.</li> <li>Identify the specific features of the Project that are being designed to “link up” with the other transportation, commuting and transit proposals in the region.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation

Commenter	Connectivity and Coordination with/Impacts to Other Transportation Facilities – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
<b>STATE AGENCIES</b>		
Carol McDonald, High Speed Rail Coordinator, Office of Transportation Planning, District 6, Department of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Department is asking to participate within its statutory responsibility during the EIR/EIS process as: a responsible agency and a cooperating agency pursuant.</li> <li>▪ The typical cross-section presented for the high-speed train shows right of way requirements at 60 feet. Please ensure that an increased footprint and right of way width at the grade separations is taken into account for the impact study.</li> <li>▪ All State crossings will require an individual Project Initiation Document (PID) and a Project Report (PR)</li> <li>▪ We have particular interest in the development of proposed station locations, sites for right of way maintenance, train storage facilities, and the heavy maintenance and repair facility, and the alignments as they relate to existing and future Caltrans facilities. Our environmental division offers the High-Speed Rail Authority and its consultant's access to our environmental staff and our many Caltrans environmental documents that explain the sensitive environmental issues unique to the Central Valley.</li> <li>▪ Encroachment permits must be obtained for all proposed activities for placement of encroachments within, under, or over the State highway rights of way. Activity and work planned in the State right of way shall be performed to State standards and specifications. The Permit Department will review and approve the activity and work in the State right of way before an encroachment permit is issued.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 7.2 Agency Consultation; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Brian Leung, Rail Crossings Engineering Section, Consumer Protection and Safety Division, California Public Utilities Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The California Public Utilities Commission has jurisdiction over the safety of highway-rail crossings in California. Application to the California Public Utilities Commission is required for construction of railroad across a public road. The design criteria of the proposed project will need to comply with Commission General Orders</li> <li>▪ The BNSF Railway alignment impacts approximately 9 at-grade crossings in Tulare County and approximately 11 grade-separated crossings, 1 grade-separated-pedestrian crossing and 37 at-grade crossings in Kern County.</li> <li>▪ The Commission recommends the consolidation and grade-separation of all existing at-grade crossings along any adopted alignment in the HST project. It is strongly recommended that the HST project operate on an entirely dedicated and fully grade-separated track. Consideration should be given to grade-separated structures that involve trenching the HST track</li> <li>▪ All proposed and existing grade-separated structure locations must be identified.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.10 Safety and Security

Commenter	Connectivity and Coordination with/Impacts to Other Transportation Facilities – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES</b>		
Ashley Swearingin, Mayor, City of Fresno	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Real prospective benefits of HST and our efforts to revitalize our Downtown area could be further enhanced by partnering with the Authority in identifying various strategies that could be used to relocate both rail freight corridors, Union Pacific (UP) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF), from their current alignments traversing the downtown area to a new alignment west of the downtown. The HST Project EIR/EIS should include the construction of a bypass loop/corridor west of the downtown area that could be used to relocate rail freight services. Additional tracks in a westerly bypass corridor could be devoted to high-speed rail for trains not scheduled to stop in Fresno.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
David J. Merchen, Community Development Director, City of Madera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to access the identified rail stations served by the High Speed Rail system (i.e. shuttle, transit bus, van). Please clearly describe how the existing outlying communities will access the proposed rail stations.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
<b>ORGANIZATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS, &amp; BUSINESSES</b>		
Tom Bailey, President, Fresno Area Residents for Rail Consolidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This plan including relocation of the UP and its rail yard to the west would also allow all phases of construction to be completed with no disruption to either freight railroad.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.11 Socioeconomic, Communities and Environmental Justice
Jerry Wilmoth, General Manager Network Infrastructure, Union Pacific Railroad Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not in Union Pacific's best interests to permit any proposed high-speed rail alignment on our rights of way.</li> <li>Confirming Union Pacific's prior statements, both written and oral, we will not voluntarily make these or any part of the Fresno Subdivision available for the high-speed rail alignment.</li> <li>The Fresno Subdivision right of way is 100 feet in width, with limited wider zones in towns and cities for station grounds. At locations between cities where the right of way is wider, the outer portions generally have been given over to public highways or other utility uses.</li> <li>In the Fresno metropolitan area, Union Pacific owns and operates a major freight yard which is crucial to its ability to serve customers on the Fresno Subdivision. Loss of this consolidation point would be a serious obstacle to these smaller rail carriers. As a result, this yard is not available in whole or in part for the HST alignment. The right of way north and south of the Fresno Yard, traversing numerous city streets, is reserved for Union Pacific and regional carrier freight operations as well. Union Pacific does not intend voluntarily to make any part of its Fresno area right of way or yard available for the HST alignment.</li> <li>Union Pacific likewise is not interested in a consolidated rail corridor in Fresno with any other</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.11 Socioeconomic, Communities and Environmental Justice; 7.2 Agency Consultation

Commenter	Connectivity and Coordination with/Impacts to Other Transportation Facilities – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
	<p>rail user.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Interstate Commerce Commission Termination Act prohibits a railroad from abandoning or discontinuing freight services over main or branch lines of railroad without authority from the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB). The Authority may not undertake any action that effectively requires or causes Union Pacific to abandon or discontinue freight service on or over any portion of the Fresno Subdivision unless prior authority from the STB has been obtained. Union Pacific will deem any attempt by HST to interfere with Union Pacific's operation over the Fresno Subdivision, or to appropriate any part of its right of way by eminent domain, as an attempt to force a de facto abandonment of freight service in violation of federal law.</li> <li>▪ Slow speed freight trains and high-speed trains are incompatible on the same tracks. Union Pacific requires overhead clearance of 23 feet 6 inches, which is higher than the Authority contemplates for its electrical system. The Authority must provide grade-separated crossovers for freight trains at necessary locations; completely separate freight trackage must be provided. HST must comply with all applicable FRA regulations with regard to freight trackage.</li> <li>▪ Union Pacific does not believe it is possible or practical to devise any mitigation measures which will permit shared use of any part of the Fresno Subdivision right of way. Union Pacific will not voluntarily make this right of way available to HST under any circumstances.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.11 Socioeconomic, Communities and Environmental Justice; 7.2 Agency Consultation
Alan Weaver, Director, Fresno County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Downtown Fresno station must allow for the maximum multi-modal interface with other means of regional and local passenger transportation.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Barbara Goodwin, Executive Director, Council of Fresno County Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Downtown Fresno Station must allow for the maximum multimodal interface with other means of regional and local passenger transportation.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Rayburn Beach, RMA Director, Madera County Resource Management Agency Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Please clearly describe and map how the existing outlying communities will access the proposed rail stations.</li> <li>▪ What will be the considerations given to the impacts of the small community airports and the larger regional Fresno Air Terminal?</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Diedre F. Kelsey, Chairman, Merced County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There are several important regional transportation projects that could be affected by this Project. These may include, but are not necessarily limited to: the Campus Parkway, the Merced-Atwater Expressway, and the Los Banos By-Pass. The County requests the EIR/EIS</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation

Commenter	Connectivity and Coordination with/Impacts to Other Transportation Facilities – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Board of Supervisors	fully evaluate the Project's relationship and conformity with the County-wide RTP and the above listed projects.	
<b>INDIVIDUALS / PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS</b>		
Lee Ayres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construct a freight rail bypass west of Fresno to be used by UP &amp; BNSF to make the UP tracks available for HST would eliminate safety hazard w/ both HST &amp; UP next to each other in an urban area.</li> <li>Cooperate in transfer of BNSF tracks in northwest Fresno to city for alternative transportation purposes, to be included in 4 county trails plan prepared by TreeTOPS.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Janet Bailey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support consolidating rail w/ BNSF service to get local RR traffic out of neighborhoods in Fresno.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.11 Socioeconomic, Communities and Environmental Justice
Penny Cellini	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Madera - Now a high speed train is going in and again no station for us. How <u>do</u> we access the train?</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Vincent Correll	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Move existing freight line out west – in the country where land is less costly. (Fresno)</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Karen Langston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have the train go somewhere that is accessible and convenient to commuters – minimizing the need for “multiple public transportation methods”. This train station should be able to serve as a central point for a local transit system that will support the HST's use into and out of the area.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Melissa Moradian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is important to communicate to the public how people can use other public transportation to get them to a station, and to understand the vision behind integrating public transportation systems.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Robert A. Ramsay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The high-speed rail line should come through Fresno on an elevated viaduct in order to allow UP and BNSF enough room, with a two-storey station with Amtrak trains using the lower level (on BNSF) and the high-speed trains using the upper level directly overhead. It would be better design for passengers (escalators included).</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Paul Saito	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tie into the Urban Maglev system in Fresno and Madera counties our corporation FAST (Fresno Area Sky Train) is planning.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Kimely Sawtell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When considering location of the stations, please look at commuter patterns and proximity to local bus lines for people to make connections to other areas.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Robert Slobodian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't miss the opportunity to link in multi modal transport bus i.e. Frankfurt Airport.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Greg Thompson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to pursue interconnection with the existing ACE, and BART services in the Altamont Pass area. Co-locate stations to provide convenient transfers with airports, light rail, and other train transportation.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Michelle Thompson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connect rail, bus and air terminals. Most effective would be to co-locate these places in every city and community.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation



Commenter	Connectivity and Coordination with/Impacts to Other Transportation Facilities – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Herb Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What will be initial effects on current Amtrak?</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.11 Socioeconomic, Communities and Environmental Justice

Commenter	Alternative Technologies – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
<b>INDIVIDUALS / PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS</b>		
Barbara Jamison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rather see the BART system extended into the Central Valley - at least as far as Merced.</li> <li>Perhaps Amtrak service can be expanded. It's already in place facility-wise. Several more north &amp; south trains would help a lot.</li> </ul>	Chapter 1 Purpose and Need and Project Objectives

Commenter	Project Funding/Cost – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES</b>		
Rayburn Beach, RMA Director, Madera County Resource Management Agency Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The High Speed Rail will result in a loss of substantial transportation funding to address continued automobile demand on the States freeway system.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; Chapter 5 Project Cost and Operations
<b>ORGANIZATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS, &amp; BUSINESSES</b>		
Dr. Lee R. Boese Jr, President, Citizens for the Betterment of Merced County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We want to see this entire project fast tracked due to the huge economic benefits it would create for the Central Valley and the rest of the state.</li> </ul>	Chapter 1 Purpose and Need and Project Objectives; Chapter 5 Project Cost and Operations
Kenneth Gostin, Transportation is for Everyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To determine a more realistic construction cost estimate, it should first be noted that capital costs have risen 50% to \$49.0 billion in 2008\$.</li> <li>It is likely that the HST will fall far short of its revenue projections, leading to a need for substantial additional infusions of taxpayer subsidies.</li> </ul>	Chapter 5 Project Cost and Operations

Commenter	Project Funding/Cost – Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
<b>INDIVIDUALS / PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS</b>		
Jesse Arthur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Money must be appropriated ASAP.</li> </ul>	Chapter 5 Project Cost and Operations
Daryl Balch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property owners or speculators will attempt to maximize the price of their properties. Sales of adjacent properties will tend to push up property values beyond reasonable prices. Some owners may seek to rezone or subdivide their land to increase values. Enact an eminent domain action to set values at an early date in the process, helping to assure properties would be acquired on a timely basis and allow more time for businesses and companies to relocate.</li> </ul>	Chapter 5 Project Cost and Operations
James Barnes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With possible stimulus money coming, lets put the project on the fast track!</li> </ul>	Chapter 5 Project Cost and Operations
Donald Leroy Brown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Money has been appropriated, now let's get to work and build it.</li> </ul>	Chapter 5 Project Cost and Operations
Mr. & Mrs Franey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will we long time home owners be taxed out of existence?</li> </ul>	Chapter 5 Project Cost and Operations
Garold D. Giersch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What will the average family pay for the HST in California?</li> </ul>	Chapter 5 Project Cost and Operations
Don E. Harris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Against CHSRA.</li> <li>What public transportation, in the USA, does not need never ending subsidies.</li> </ul>	Chapter 5 Project Cost and Operations
Lia N. McGinnis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will the cost to ride the high speed rail system be affordable to our local lower income people?</li> </ul>	Chapter 5 Project Cost and Operations
Herb Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will ticket costs compare to current Amtrak?</li> </ul>	Chapter 5 Project Cost and Operations

Commenter	Issues Outside Scope of Merced to Fresno Study Area – Comments	Notes
<b>FEDERAL AGENCIES</b>		
Kim Forrest, Wildlife Refuge Manager, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We strongly urge the HSRA to eliminate any high-speed train alignments that cross through or are adjacent to the Grasslands Ecological Area</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
<b>STATE AGENCIES</b>		
Jeffrey R. Single, Ph.D., Regional Manager, Department of Fish and Game	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The preferred alignment will also directly impact the Department's Allensworth Ecological Reserve (ALER)</li> <li>The Department questions whether there will be enough room in the existing BNSF right-of-way to accommodate an additional track without encroaching on Department lands.</li> <li>Some sections of ALER were acquired as mitigation for impacts from other projects. The loss</li> </ul>	Comment has been forwarded to the Fresno to Bakersfield team.

Commenter	Issues Outside Scope of Merced to Fresno Study Area – Comments	Notes
	<p>of this land would require significant compensation on the part of the Authority as this land was already used to compensate for other project impacts to Threatened and Endangered species.</p>	
<p>Kathy Weatherman, District Superintendent, Department of Parks and Recreation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ State Parks is concerned that there may be significant impacts on the Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park associated with this project.</li> <li>▪ State Parks encourages the California High-Speed Authority to consider only rail corridor alternatives which either direct or indirect impacts to Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park and other critical publicly and privately protected conservation lands in order to avoid habitat fragmentation and degradation of public held natural resource values.</li> <li>▪ The draft EIR/EIS should analyze the environmental acoustics, noise intrusion and vibrations impacts to Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, as well as other environmentally sensitive publicly protected lands.</li> <li>▪ The draft EIR/EIS should analyze impacts to the Park's aesthetics values. Impacts need to be identified and measures proposed for avoidance, minimization or mitigation of these impacts. Specific analysis should focus and identify critical public viewing areas such as the new proposed visitor center, highways, trails, pullouts, parks, and should include intrusion of the linear corridor into the landscape. Short-term impacts associated with the construction phase, should also be discussed. Site specific restoration efforts should be detailed.</li> <li>▪ The draft EIR/EIS should address the potential direct and cumulative impacts on connectivity.</li> <li>▪ The proposed project has the potential to restrict terrestrial wildlife and reduce their numbers by increasing the impediment to their movement between the Pixley Wildlife Refuge and Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park.</li> <li>▪ The proposed EIR should analyze the direct and cumulative effects of the removal of grasslands on avian species.</li> <li>▪ Adjoining agricultural use next to protected wildland can be compatible if properly managed. They provide some habitat value, and they buffer the protected area from more intensive human uses.</li> <li>▪ The draft EIR/EIS should address the potential direct and cumulative impacts on cultural resources.</li> <li>▪ The draft EIR/EIS needs to include in its analysis of land use compatibility with Colonel Allensworth state Historic Park the issues mentioned in the NOP (views, light, noise, pollution, and traffic) as well as recreational impacts, and the elimination of foraging wildlife habitat.</li> <li>▪ The draft EIR/EIS should consider the cumulative effects of past, present, and reasonably anticipated future projects producing related or cumulative impacts, including those projects outside the lead agency's control.</li> </ul>	<p>Comment has been forwarded to the Fresno to Bakersfield team.</p>

Commenter	Issues Outside Scope of Merced to Fresno Study Area – Comments	Notes
<b>LOCAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES</b>		
Brad Aborn, Mariposa County Supervisor, District 1, Mariposa County Board of Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Return the HST route back to the Altamont Pass. The Pacheco Pass is completely unacceptable.</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
Jerry O'Banion, Merced County Board of Supervisors, District 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My Supervisorial District includes the City of Los Banos, and I share their concern regarding the lack of a station in the area. Los Banos, and many other west side communities have become major commute communities. Any comprehensive project through this area should include a method, (a station is most obvious) to relieve some of the commute impacts.</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
Diana Westmoreland-Pedrozo, Executive Director, Merced County Farm Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Merced County Farm Bureau did not support the Pacheco Pass route and believes that the Altamont needs to be look at as the prime route.</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
<b>ORGANIZATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS, &amp; BUSINESSES</b>		
Kenneth Gostin, Transportation is for Everyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VTM comparisons between Pacheco Pass and Altamont Pass show that Pacheco Pass has 1/3 the traffic of Altamont Pass. Greater congestion and potential for ridership relief exist with an Altamont alignment. Why were VMT comparisons absent from HSRA studies?</li> <li>Condors from the Pinnacles Condor Repropagation Project have been spotted in the area of Pacheco Pass.</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
<b>INDIVIDUALS / PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS</b>		
Jeremiah Alley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The HST doesn't plan a stop at LAX. And that is the fatal flaw.</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to appropriate project team
Joe Aramburu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I support the Pacheco Pass route as it will provide faster service to San Francisco from Los Angeles.</li> <li>I also support a HST stop/station in Visalia or at east of Hanford.</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced and Fresno to Bakersfield Project Teams
Jesse Arthur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Great use of tunnels going thru Pacheco Pass.</li> </ul>	Comment will be

Commenter	Issues Outside Scope of Merced to Fresno Study Area – Comments	Notes
		forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
Mark Brux	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A train stop is needed in Los Banos/Santa Nella because 1) of the large carbon footprint left by commuters from here thru Pacheco Pass to Gilroy-San Jose; 2) CA. state itself projects Los Banos-Santa Nella area to be 1 of 3 hubs of major population growth in the Central Valley in the next few decades.</li> <li>As for the train being able to reach 200 mph, 1) there are already other stops planned, such as along the Hwy 99 corridor, which are at least as close together as Los Banos/Santa Nella &amp; Gilroy.</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
James Carter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A station in a small city (Hanford) will attract people to the cheap housing while they can keep their jobs in a metropolitan center, and would encourage more cheap low-density houses to be built in that small city.</li> <li>I urge you to study carefully the effects of a station on these towns, as well as the no station alternative.</li> </ul>	Comment has been forwarded to Fresno to Bakersfield Team
Julie Cates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please consider Visalia as a stop/station on this system.</li> <li>Additionally, there is no existing public transit system between Porterville – Visalia – Fresno and the rural towns in between.</li> </ul>	Comment has been forwarded to Fresno to Bakersfield Team
John R. Donaldson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Running the line between Hanford &amp; Visalia seems important, although a western route with lots of connectors is possible.</li> <li>A true express route LA – SF, bypassing some or all stations, will be very important for taking traffic off the roads and airlines.</li> </ul>	Comment has been forwarded to Fresno to Bakersfield Team
Kim Forrest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The EIS says that there will be no stop in Los Banos (Western Merced County). How can that be assured; the explosive growth that a stop there would cause would destroy the rural &amp; conservation values of the area.</li> <li>The Altamont route is much less environmentally damaging than Pacheco.</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
Diana Franklin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could students (engineering) at the University of California - Merced possibly intern with various departments?</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
Khang Huynh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Favor of a high speed rail stop in Los Banos.</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
Mark Johnston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I support Pacheco Pass route and don't support LA-Bakersfield via Palmdale.</li> <li>Consider a Palmdale-Barstow-Las Vegas leg. Gets us a LA-LV route other than some Maglev boondoggle. Consider a Riverside-Indio-Blythe-Phoenix connection in the future. What</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team

Commenter	Issues Outside Scope of Merced to Fresno Study Area – Comments	Notes
	happened to the LAUS to LAX leg? Finish Irvine-SD, direct rather than wandering via Escondido. If you keep the inland route, consider a Riverside–SB-Victorville-Barstow connection with continued service to Las Vegas.	Team
Christi Obata	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A rail stop will help ease congestion, improve our air quality and improve the quality of life for many Central Valley residents. Reconsider your decision to forgo the rail stop in Los Banos.</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
Dale Overbay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify any potential conflicts with PG&amp;E's major gas and electric transmission lines.</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
David Pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Happy to see the stop in Gilroy.</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
Glenn Pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have the San Jose/Merced line hug the north or south side of Hwy 152 as it approaches Hwy 99</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
Carolyn Romersa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you cannot go to Visalia, run a fast bus from Visalia to Hanford so Visalia to Fresno work commuters can catch the HST in Hanford to go to Fresno.</li> </ul>	
Anna M. Sanchez	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reconsider the route through Los Banos, very near "El Campo" the migrant camp. We may not need a bypass in Los Banos if we get a HST stop available to the city residents.</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
Robert Slobodian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Palmdale to San Diego via Cajon Pass option: keep it open as an addition, that way an LA to Las Vegas line is anticipated.</li> <li>At Palmdale make routing provisions to go through eventual regional airport that will in future decades take international transport from LAX.</li> </ul>	Comment has been forwarded to Bakersfield to Palmdale Project Team
Frank Vierra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More inclined to support an Altamont Pass connection to the bay area than the Pacheco Pass corridor.</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team
Diana Westmoreland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not supporting the Pacheco Pass route. HST needs to come up the SJ Valley from LA to the Altamont Pass avoiding our wetlands and farmland that work cooperatively in Merced County.</li> </ul>	Comment will be forwarded to San Jose to Merced Project Team



**Table 3-2**  
Summary of Verbal Public Scoping Comments

Commenter	Verbal Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
<b>Fresno Public Meeting</b>		
Eddie Clement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Myself and the Carpenters Union of Northern California back this project.</li> <li>If it goes through Fresno, it needs to go through the downtown area, specifically near China Town. That would help with the redevelopment of Fresno.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Jess Mendez	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I have property located at 1920 Ventura and it is close to where the proposed area is. And if they want to acquire the property and if they are interested, they can contact me. I'll be willing to sell.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Anthony Jimenez	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My father Jesse Mendez would like to offer his property as a maintenance facility or a supply yard.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Adua Butticci	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I can't wait for it to happen so I can go to LA and San Francisco. It will reduce the fog congestion and it will be a great thing for the valley.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Julie Molina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is long overdue. Amtrak is a good source of transportation but it has problems getting people places on time. It is good for senior citizens.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Paul A. Negrete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The area where the hub is proposed to be has a high unemployment rate and high poverty rate. It would be great if the project would way out in advance interphase with the local training agencies to develop employment opportunities via training for those specific careers.</li> </ul>	3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice
Erica Yanez	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They did a great job presenting information they had to the public today. I think that more of these are needed.</li> </ul>	7.1 Public Involvement and Outreach
Robert Jeffries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If it could stop the freight whistles that I hear today. Double pane windows don't shut it out. So that would be a big concern for us.</li> <li>It is going to take quite a bit of farm property with it, which is shrinking.</li> <li>I would imagine it will devalue my property considerably.</li> <li>Too many roads will be shut off for our access east and west. That is a concern because we travel across the tracks almost daily.</li> </ul>	3.3 Noise and Vibration; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Carolyn Romersa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Run a line through Visalia or run a bus line, a quick bus line, from Visalia to Hanford so they can pick it up and go from Hanford to Fresno.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.1 Transportation

Commenter	Verbal Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Bill Parker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Locate a maintenance facility in the southeast section of Fresno, perhaps in the east end or Calwa area. There are industrial parks and redevelopment zones the city may be able to provide land or incentives that reduce cost in developing in those areas. There is a larger employment pool and technical pool in a major metro area than there is in smaller rural towns such as Merced or Madera. Locating the maintenance facility in a major metro area would be a greater draw to possible employees than relocation to smaller rural locations.</li> <li>Is it possible to use the historic Southern Pacific Depot in downtown Fresno as the intermodal facility for the high speed rail?</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Lupe Perez	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I'm supportive of the proposed site that they are looking at between Stanislaus and Ventura for Fresno. The UP, the rail lines, should be consolidated through Fresno and moved to the outside corridor to pass through Fresno.</li> <li>I would suggest that the maintenance facility's location be in the Fresno County area.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Leonard Louie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I would like to see city core tied into city core, municipal transit, the Greyhound, the cabs, the light rail, the Greyhound Depot, the bus line, shopping, retail business and rental cars so people that do get off there, can have transit to go to the direction.</li> <li>The corridor that I like is the one by Highway 99.</li> <li>There should be a package to be reasonable for people that are going to use it for a daily transit.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.1 Transportation
Dwight Kroll	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce some sort of nexus between the Fresno air terminal and the HST Station to try to combine transportation facilities throughout the metropolitan area. This might be accomplished with future relocation of the airport and consequently the station site in Fresno should consider that option.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
John Raymond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the general location of the terminal station in downtown Fresno</li> <li>The main entrance to the terminal would be on the downtown side. So we'd like the designer to take special attention to what happens of the treatment on the backside, which is the China Town area. It is likely to be a place for long-term parking facilities, large parking lots and rental car facilities, so the aesthetics need some special attention. We'd like some input in the planning to the adjacent China Town businesses.</li> <li>I've indicated it in red a couple of sites for the potential maintenance facility in Fresno. One on the west side and one I guess it would be south</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.1 Transportation
Loran Harding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please consider running the high speed rail closer to the campus of UC Merced.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
Diane Merrill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I would like to see rail service rather than a bus connection between Bakersfield and Los Angeles.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives

Commenter	Verbal Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
<b>Madera Public Meeting</b>		
Ronald Lawson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amtrak should be changed over and placed on the Southern Pacific track, used as the local train connection in the network so that people in the smaller communities can go into the hub, which would be in Merced or Fresno for this part of the valley, and take the bullet train to their destination. Once they get to their destination, there has to be a ground transportation network that would move them from the point of the terminal to their destination. The hospitals, the shopping in Fresno are 10 miles the other side of town from the trains. There is no credible transportation network to move people to St. Agnes Hospital where all the medical facilities are. Once they get to Fresno, there's no way to get there. Many of us go to the VA, same problem. The ideal model is like the ones that are used in Europe. Express lanes go through all major capitals. Once you get to where you're going, then you get on the local train and take it to the city you want. Once you get to the city, you look on the wall, has a big map that has all the bus and street cars. You can figure out how to get where you're going.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.1 Transportation
Bill Wattenbarger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For short distances, 300-plus or minus miles, it's a whole lot better than flying or the Greyhound.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation
Norman Gould	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep it all decentralized, put the stops out away from the cities, let the people come to the stop</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
<b>Merced Public Meeting</b>		
Greg Wellman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Atwater supports the designation of Castle Air Force Base as a maintenance hub for the high-speed rail project</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives
John-Pierre Mendoza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A high-speed rail system that crosses the nation from Seattle to Miami, New York to San Diego.</li> <li>How about placing all of our grid underground where it is not susceptible to minor weather changes and remove the dangerous posts from our roads, quickly building 20 nuclear large power plants and real recycling centers every 50 miles. We can move huge amounts of gasoline across the nation. Certainly we can move greater amounts of water from where it kills to where it is needed.</li> </ul>	Chapter 1 Purpose and Need and Project Objectives

Commenter	Verbal Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Jeremy Terhune	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defenders of Wildlife and our 90,000 members and supporters in California join the Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge manager Kim Forrest in strongly urging the HSRA to eliminate any high-speed train alignments that cross through or adjacent to the Grasslands Ecological Area (GEA), the largest block of contiguous wetlands remaining in California, providing critical habitat to over 47 endangered, threatened or candidate species under state or federal law. The typical track layout will create a profound barrier that will further isolate wildlife populations, interfere with water flow, water bird nesting and breeding, and interrupt existing wildlife corridors. Noise, vibration, and lighting from the high-speed rail will lead to avoidance by wildlife species and contribute to habitat fragmentation.</li> <li>The HSRA should consider other options that consolidate transportation infrastructure within metropolitan areas, and alleviate traffic, such as the Altamont Pass alignment.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands
Joseph Maiorino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Owens a 211-acre parcel on Henry Miller Road (the road doesn't go through there, it's just open ground now.) The project would split that property, and he's concerned about moving equipment back and forth, and pesticide applications.</li> <li>Should follow the 152 or the I-5 corridor.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives; 3.11 Socioeconomics, Communities and Environmental Justice
Diana Westmoreland-Pedrozo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The predominant land that is going to be impacted will be agricultural land that is privately owned. Provide for fair and just compensation for any loss of agricultural land and the ability to farm that land in its totality. Splitting segments of land up has an impact, long-term, to the owner-operator of that land.</li> <li>Farming has been able to be a good complement to wetlands, and the impact of any project needs to take that into consideration.</li> <li>Merced County Farm Bureau did not support the Pacheco Pass route and believes that the Altamont needs to be look at as the prime route.</li> </ul>	3.6 Biological Resources and Wetlands; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Christie Hendricks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It's important to include childcare as close as we can to transportation hubs so that working parents can utilize all transportation options.</li> </ul>	3.1 Transportation; 3.12 Local Growth, Station Planning and Land Use
Jose Delgadillo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I'd like to volunteer to work on a committee of the high-speed rail. I am retired from Union Pacific Railroad.</li> </ul>	7.1 Public Involvement and Outreach

Commenter	Verbal Comments	Relevant EIR/EIS Section(s)
Kim Forrest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can this be assured that there will never be a station between Gilroy and Merced? What is needed is some sort of legal encumbrance. The Authority is committing to buy at least 10,000 acres of conservation easements to mitigate for high-speed train. And in my experience where the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the largest operator of conservation easements in Merced County, and we have already run into a lot of resistance of selling easements because people are speculation that land values will skyrocket.</li> <li>I submitted comments for the EIS in 2007, and I'm not finding them on their website, and I'm wondering if all comments, whether they're supportive or not, are available to the public.</li> </ul>	Chapter 2 Alternatives – San Jose to Merced EIR/EIS





## 4.0 Next Steps

Following the scoping process, the project team will conduct an alternatives analysis (AA) to evaluate proposed alternatives at a more general level than would be conducted in a Draft EIR/EIS in order to provide the California High-Speed Rail Authority Board of Directors with information necessary to determine which alternatives should be fully evaluated through the EIR/EIS process. This analysis will be partially based on the comments received during scoping, including alternatives proposed in scoping comments. Throughout the AA process, the project team will coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies.

Once the Authority has determined which alternatives will be evaluated in the Draft EIR/EIS, the project team will begin in-depth analysis of existing conditions in the project area and potential impacts of the project alternatives. Throughout the evaluation process, the project team will coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies. The Authority will also continue to conduct public outreach to ensure that the public is apprised of the project's progress and has the opportunity to provide input.

The analysis of existing conditions and potential impacts of project alternatives will then be synthesized into the Draft EIR/EIS, and the Federal Railroad Administration and the Authority will publish the Draft EIR/EIS. Publication is anticipated in spring 2011. A 60-day comment period will begin following publication of the Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register* and after filing a Notice of Completion with the California State Clearinghouse. The Authority will distribute notices of availability to those on the project mailing list and to potentially affected property owners. In addition, the EIR/EIS will be posted on the Authority's web site. Public hearings will be provided in the project area to provide the public the opportunity to discuss the project based on information in the EIR/EIS with the project team and provide comments. These public hearings will be advertised in local newspapers, included in the Notice of Availability and Notice of Completion, and posted on the Authority's web site.

After close of the public comment period and review of agency and public comments on the EIR/EIS, the Authority's Board of Directors, in conjunction with the FRA, will select a preferred alternative based on the analysis in the EIR/EIS and comments received. Identification of the preferred alternative is anticipated at the end of 2011. Additional analysis of the preferred alternative will be conducted and a Final EIR/EIS published. The Final EIR/EIS will respond to comments received on the Draft EIR/EIS and specify mitigation measures for project impacts. As with the Draft EIR/EIS, a Notice of Availability will be published in the *Federal Register*. The Authority will select the project to be built and prepare a Notice of Determination for the California State Clearinghouse pursuant to CEQA. With appropriate completion of the Final EIR/EIS, the FRA will issue a Record of Decision for the project, which will present the basis for the decision and summarize the mitigation measures that will be incorporated into the project. After the Record of Decision, project final design and construction can commence contingent on funding availability.

